

## Big Q's Big Six

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# Big Q's Big Six

by [bonesandthebees \(bonesandcacti\)](#)

## Summary

*"We know it's risky," Jack told him, "but we're thinking of pulling the heist the night of the sendoff ball. All the royals will be in attendance, meaning most of the guards will be concentrated there and not in the rest of the palace."*

*"All the royals will be at the sendoff ball, right?" Niki then asked, raising an eyebrow at Tommy.*

*"Uh, yeah, they will," Tommy muttered, staring at the paper. "King Dream, Emperor Schlatt, Monarch Eret, King Philza, Prince Wilbur, General Technoblade, and, uh, Prince Theseus."*

*"Hell yeah, and we'll be able to swoop in, steal Schlatt's book, and get out before anyone even notices us. It'll be a piece of cake!" Tubbo declared with a grin, patting Tommy's shoulder.*

*"Yup," Tommy said quietly, gaze still fixated on the paper. "A piece of cake."*

or, Tommy somehow gets himself involved in a heist, while forgetting to mention that he's also royalty.

## Notes

### HEY GUYS NEW FIC

okay so i know i still need to update that other multi chap fic of mine, seven, but atm i hit a wall with it?? so uhhh no clue when that'll be updated again

HOWEVER I came up with the idea for this fic and got so hyped about it i had to do it. I don't know how consistently I'll be updating, but I have the second chapter pretty much finished so that should be done soon!

anyway, with this fic you're gonna get a lot of thief shenanigans, sbi family dynamic fun, and bench trio all being dirty crime boys, so look forward to that

(also, my usual clarification note, this fic is about the characters of the dsmp not the cc's themselves)

hope you enjoy!



# a once in a lifetime opportunity

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The room was shrouded in shadow.

This didn't matter much to Ranboo. He could see much better in the dark than a human, so the gloom that covered the room was inconsequential as he looked around to try and get his bearings. The room itself was small and difficult to maneuver in—cluttered with different pieces of furniture and old antiques shoved in every free corner.

There was a small sliver of moonlight shining across the floor from the one window in the room. It stretched across the wood planks, onto a dusty red couch and climbed up to a dilapidated dresser. Following the beam of light, Ranboo's gaze finally caught a glint of something shiny, and a small smile broke over his face.

Sitting on top of the dresser made of rotting wood was a golden statue. Ranboo wasn't sure what it was supposed to be a statue *of* exactly, possibly a person? But the swirling metal and the glimmering jewels embedded into the gold itself only served to make it look less like a person and more like some kind of abstract... circle.

In short, Ranboo had no idea what it was supposed to be. But it definitely looked expensive, and that's all that mattered.

Stepping between the gaps in the furniture, Ranboo reached out to the dresser, and managed to grab the edge of the statue. When he dragged it off the edge, he gasped at the weight of the statue itself, and grunted as he threw it into the satchel he had over his shoulder.

With that squared away, Ranboo then did another sweep of the room. There had to be more valuables in here than that. Maybe an old jewelry box was hiding in the dresser? Or maybe there were more statues similar to the one Ranboo had just swiped-

“RANBOO!”

Ranboo's head whipped up as the door to the small room slammed open, revealing a harried looking Tubbo panting in the doorway.

“Time's up, bossman! We gotta dip, NOW!” Tubbo said, rushing into the room and grabbing Ranboo by the wrist.

“Wait, wh-”

Ranboo was cut off by the sounds of shouts echoing from the hall Tubbo had run in from, and Ranboo's eyes widened as he realized they'd been caught. He let Tubbo drag him out of the room, not bothering to shut the door behind him as they made a sharp right and broke into a full sprint.

Behind them, Ranboo could hear the shouts growing louder. The statue bounced painfully against his hip in the bag as he ran, but he forced himself to ignore it as he struggled to keep up with Tubbo. Somehow, despite Tubbo having much *much* shorter legs than Ranboo, he was ridiculously fast.

“Where are we going?!” Ranboo yelled to Tubbo, knowing that this hallway wasn’t in the route they’d planned for their escape.

“Back out the way we came!” Tubbo yelled back, yanking on Ranboo’s hand again to make a sharp left.

Ah, great. That meant they had to get down the stairs without getting caught by the guards now chasing them, and get all the way to the dining room to jump out the window they’d climbed in through.

Ranboo opened his mouth to ask another question, when something bright whizzed by his head. Jumping away from the projectile, Ranboo gaped when he saw a flaming arrow sticking out of the wall where his head had just been.

Looking back at their assailants, Ranboo could see a man decked out in glowing armor, pointing a crossbow right at his face. The noble they were robbing had hired security, huh? That hadn’t been in the research.

“YEAH LET’S GO!” Ranboo then shouted, picking up speed as he started dragging Tubbo along.

The two ran through several more twists and turns, and Ranboo wondered who decided to make this mansion such a labyrinth. Although Ranboo had a vague idea of where they were in relation to the staircase—they all had to memorize the layout of the mansion before coming here of course—every turn was making his head spin and he struggled to keep his sense of direction intact.

Right turn. Left turn. Footsteps pounded behind them.

Sharp right—no, wait, double back! The footsteps were getting closer.

Another right, then around the corner. Duck through the art gallery, sprint through the archway, and then there it was!

At that moment, the grand staircase was one of the most beautiful things Ranboo had ever seen. Tubbo surged ahead of him again, leaping onto the railing to slide down it, his own bag rattling with stolen goods. Meanwhile, Ranboo knew he was going to break his neck if he tried that stunt, so instead he just took the steps two at a time, dodging flaming arrows purely on instinct.

As soon as they reached the bottom of the stairs, there was a flash of pink as Niki sprinted from the kitchen. She spotted them and rushed over, grabbing both their hands and yanking them towards the dining room.

“C’mon guys let’s go!” She shouted, her cloaking billowing behind her as she ran.

Another flaming arrow lodged itself into the wall right next to Niki’s head, which she didn’t even flinch at. Their shoes thundered against the wood floors, and Ranboo’s heartbeat matched the tempo. His lungs were burning, and he wasn’t sure how much more running he could take.

Then, he spotted their salvation. The window at the far end of the dining room, still left ajar from when they had entered. Niki shoved it open and dove out without any hesitation, and Tubbo followed immediately behind. Before Ranboo could jump out behind them, another arrow whizzed by, and this time there was a flash of pain on his cheek. For a brief moment he was stunned, but then he heard Niki yelling for him outside and jumped over the windowsill, dropping to the ground below right as another arrow flew above his head.

Tubbo grabbed his hand again and pulled him towards the imposing fence that wrapped around the entire property. There, on the corner pillar of the fence, a rope was waiting for them.

Behind them, Ranboo heard a loud curse, and when he glanced back he saw the guard leaning out the window. He pointed the crossbow at Ranboo again, but before he could fire, a throwing knife knocked into his helmet sending him stumbling backwards. Niki held a second throwing knife in her hand, waiting just a moment to see if one had been enough.

When a loud crash signaled that the guard had fallen over, the trio knew they had enough time and sprinted to the rope.

Tubbo scurried up it first, his small frame blending in with the shadows as he reached the top of the pillar. Then, Niki pushed for Ranboo to go next, standing behind him with her throwing knives in hand. The statue still weighed his shoulder down, and his hip was aching fiercely from how much it had slammed against the bones. While a part of him just wanted to try and teleport up there, he already could tell the weight of the statue was going to throw him off, and he had a very real chance of overshooting and falling from way too high up. So instead, he grit his teeth and forced himself to ignore the soreness, yanking himself up the rope with the last dregs of adrenaline he had left in his system.

When he reached the top, a hand reached down to pull him up the rest of the way, and Ranboo was met with a grinning face behind a pair of red and blue glasses. Once Ranboo was securely on the top of the pillar, Jack let go and looked back down to the rope Niki was now climbing up.

There was more shouting coming from the house as the guard clambered out the windowsill, but it was too late. Jack pulled Niki on the rope the rest of the way up, and then the four of them jumped down to the ground below, all of them grunting at the impact.

By the time the guard reached the edge of the fence, they were well out of sight and safe from any more chases.

They stopped running when they hit the treeline surrounding the mansion. Now hidden in the forest, Ranboo just about collapsed against a tree, dropping his bag with a loud clang.

Breathing heavily, he sank to the ground, and Tubbo dropped down next to him, also panting as he leaned into Ranboo's shoulder.

In front of them, Niki stood with her hands on her knees, giving Jack a thumbs up as he patted her back. They all stayed silent for a few minutes, catching their breath and trying to calm their pounding hearts.

It was only when Ranboo had a sufficient amount of oxygen back in his brain did he realize that something was amiss.

"Uh, guys?" Ranboo said, his voice hoarse from the shouting. "Where's Fundy?"

Jack opened his mouth to reply, when suddenly there was a flash of bright orange in the corner of Ranboo's eye as Fundy basically *materialized* from the shadows.

"Right here!" Fundy declared, holding up his own bag of loot that was practically breaking at the seams. "Sorry, I got caught up trying to dodge that guard back there."

Unlike the rest of them, Fundy didn't even sound winded. Somehow, this was how every job that involved a chase turned out. While the rest of them would struggle to dodge arrows while running away, Fundy was silent and could perfectly melt into the shadows. Niki, Ranboo, and Tubbo would leave every chase a gross sweaty mess, while Fundy looked as pristine as he had been when they set out earlier that evening.

"How do you do that, man?" Tubbo whined, slumping further against Ranboo as he glared at Fundy.

Fundy smirked, his tail swishing behind him. "Fox secret."

"I'm glad you made it out okay," Niki said, straightening up to pat Fundy's shoulder. Then, she turned to Ranboo and Tubbo, and raised an eyebrow. "Would either of you care to explain what alerted the guard upstairs?"

Ranboo shrunk back against the tree. "Don't look at me! I was in that storage room when Tubbo ran in telling me to run!"

"Traitor," Tubbo hissed under his breath as Niki turned her gaze to him.

"Tubbo?" She questioned, folding her arms across her chest.

"Look, it totally wasn't my fault," Tubbo started, pressing further into Ranboo almost as if he was trying to hide behind him. "There was a bump in the rug that I didn't see in the dark, and I might've, uh, fallen over and broken a vase."

"Tubbo..." Niki muttered, pinching the bridge of her nose.

"Aw c'mon, don't be too hard on him," Jack jumped in, slinging an arm around Niki's shoulders. "That place looked dark as shit, I wouldn't have been able to see my own two hands! Can't blame the kid for tripping on a rug."

Niki sighed and shook her head, but her expression relaxed as she leaned into Jack's arm. Then, she glanced back to Tubbo, and smiled. "Jack's right, don't beat yourself up, Tubbo. Happens to all of us."

Tubbo mouthed a silent 'thank you' to Jack when Niki looked away, and he gave Tubbo a thumbs up in response.

"So are we ready to head back to base?" Fundy asked, adjusting the straps on his bag.

"I don't know if I can stand," Tubbo whined.

Ranboo blinked. "I am not carrying you."

Tubbo groaned and butted his head against Ranboo's cheek. "Fine, but if I die from exhaustion I'm blaming you."

"Yeah yeah, how many possible deaths of yours am I responsible for now?" Ranboo asked, grunting as he pushed to his own feet and wincing as he threw the bag over his shoulder once more.

"Let's see," Tubbo started, standing up and holding out his hand to count on, "if I die from one of my own explosives it's your fault for not making me run safety tests. If I die from lack of sleep it's your fault for keeping me up at night. If I die from..." and he continued on.

The group made their way through the forest, circling around until they had made it to the outskirts of one of the seedier districts of the city. When it was this late at night, the only people still out were either there for the nightlife, or they were up to more nefarious activities like Ranboo's group.

So thankfully, no one gave the group a second glance as they emerged from the forest, dressed in all black with large bags slung over their shoulders. Ranboo's legs screamed from soreness as they walked over the bumpy cobblestone street, and he'd had to switch to carrying the bag with his other shoulder. Even though he knew he was going to feel awful in the morning, at least the job had been a success.

Close to the end of the street they were on, there was an abandoned house. Rotting wood creaked in the breeze, weeds sprouting up from the floorboards and stretching to the sky above. There were more holes in the roof than actual roof, and the whole group was bathed in moonlight as Niki led them inside.

They climbed down the stairs to the stone basement underneath the house. A flickering torch cast dancing shadows along the walls of the cellar, the air dropping several degrees in temperature as Ranboo dropped off the last step.

At the far end of the cellar, in the darkest corner where the light from the torch couldn't reach, there was a heavy metal door. In front of the door, a teenage boy stood, his face barely visible in the shadows.

"Purpled, we're here to see him," Niki said, switching her bag from one hand to the other.



“Yeah, he’s been expecting you,” the bouncer shrugged, reaching over to swing the heavy door open.

The sound of voices and music poured out from the door, and Purpled gestured for them all to enter. They each entered one by one, and Ranboo gave the bouncer a shy nod as he stepped through.

Inside, the wave of noise was so much louder than it had been even just outside the door. People laughed and cheered with one another, finely manicured hands holding delicate glasses of deeply colored liquor as bright poker chips rattled across the tables. The casino was in full swing for the evening, with dealers passing out their cards and players already slurring their words.

The casino itself was rather grand considering it was literally built underneath an abandoned building. With high, arching ceilings, a grand staircase that led down to the casino floor, and a crystalline chandelier that hung above it all, the place could be mistaken for a high end hotel instead of one of the kingdom’s most notorious underground gambling rings.

Thankfully, their group didn’t have to cross the casino floor, as that would certainly draw a lot of attention to themselves. Instead, Niki made a sharp right as soon as the metal door slammed shut behind them, leading them away from the casino proper and into a dark hallway off to the side.

The sounds of the casino faded behind them, the clanking of the stolen goods echoing off the walls. Niki approached an unlabeled sleek black door at the end of the hall, and knocked on it three solid times before stepping back.

There was a moment of silence, and then Ranboo could hear shuffling on the other side. The door clicked as it was unlocked, and it swung open to reveal a grinning Quackity.

“Damn, back already?” He asked, eyes flickering over each member of the group.

“We had to leave a bit sooner than we planned, but we still got a great haul,” Jack explained to Quackity.

Nodding, Quackity stepped back and held the door open. “Alright, bring it in and let’s see what you got.”

Everyone filed into the room, Ranboo having to duck under the doorframe to avoid hitting his head. As Quackity shut the door behind them, he slid a deadbolt back into place, and then gestured to the large poker table in the center of the office.

“Drop it all here,” he told them.

Niki dumped her bag first. In it there was a pile of Primes, a few small decorative knick knacks encrusted with jewels, and a few heavy looking books that fell out. Next, Tubbo emptied out his own bag, a few necklaces and rings clattering to the table. Then, Ranboo carefully took out his one prize from the job, setting the weird statue on the table and smiling when he noticed Niki and Quackity’s wide-eyed looks of surprise.

Lastly, Fundy opened up his bag and the group watched as piles of jewelry, Primes, and jewels came tumbling out. As always, Fundy had the largest haul of all of them. But before anyone could comment, he held up one finger and reached into the bag again, pulling out a leather poster tube. He popped off the cap and carefully took out a rolled up piece of paper, spreading it out to reveal a large painting Ranboo had seen in the foyer on their way in.

“Fuckin’ hell, Fundy,” Jack muttered.

Quackity, meanwhile, was grinning like a madman as his gaze skimmed over the loot. He ran his hands over the Primes and jewelry, whistled at the painting Fundy had stolen, and then turned his sights to Ranboo’s statue.

“Jesus christ, this thing is ugly,” Quackity said, picking it up and grunting at the weight. “But we’re sure as hell gonna get a great deal on this! This thing is solid!”

“I didn’t even know you were carrying that, Ranboo. How did you run with that in your bag?” Niki asked, giving him a concerned look.

“I’m gonna be in so much pain tomorrow,” Ranboo deadpanned in reply. Frowning in sympathy, Niki walked around the table and rested a hand on Ranboo’s shoulder, and he gave her a small smile to reassure her he was fine.

“So you think we’ll get a good deal for all of this?” Tubbo asked, shoving his hands in his pockets.

“Yeah, I can fence pretty much all of this I’d say. You guys are getting better at picking out the best stuff,” Quackity told them, stepping back from the table. “I’ll let you know once I find buyers for everything, then you’ll receive the usual percentage for payment.”

“Sounds good,” Niki replied, folding her arms across her chest. “I’m guessing you don’t have news about any other jobs yet, so we’ll come back in a few nights-”

“Actually,” Quackity cut Niki off, holding up a hand, “I might have another job lined up for you guys already.”

Niki raised her eyebrows. “Wait, really?”

“Yeah, but it’s a bit more complicated than your usual gigs,” Quackity explained, moving away from the poker table and to the desk at the back of the room. Bending over, he dug around in his drawer for a few moments before taking out a wrinkled piece of paper. Then, he straightened back up and strolled to stand in front of the group.

“There’s an anonymous source going around asking if there’s a crew that can pull off a heist for them,” Quackity began, his unscarred eye skimming the page in front of him. “It involves breaking into a heavily-guarded area and stealing a specific item. A very rare, and valuable item.”

“That’s not too different from what we’ve done before. What’s the catch?” Niki asked, frowning at Quackity.

“Well,” Quackity chuckled to himself, shaking his head. “You’ve all heard of the Dandelion Festival happening right now, right?”

“Uh, a bunch of other royals are visiting from all the other kingdoms on the continent for some reason, right?” Ranboo guessed.

“That’s right. King Dream is hosting a festival to celebrate the alliances our kingdom has with all the other kingdoms nearby, since it’s the 300 year anniversary of the Great War,” Quackity explained, smoothing out the paper on the table. “Because of that, the palace has more royals in it at once than it ever has before. There’s the Monarch Eret of Angia, King Philza of the Antarctic Empire with his sons, and even Emperor Schlatt of Manberg.”

“I thought it was called L’Manberg?” Niki questioned.

“And isn’t it a democracy? Why would Schlatt be an emperor?” Jack chimed in.

“It was until Schlatt was elected. After being inaugurated he apparently changed the name to Manberg and changed his title from President to Emperor,” Quackity explained, a scowl twisting his scarred lip. “Anyway, long story short, there are a lot of royals in the palace right now, including Schlatt. And according to our potential contractor, Schlatt has something very special in his possession that he’d brought with him on this trip. Something that a lot of people are willing to pay very good money for.”

All at once, the implication of Quackity’s words hit Ranboo. Someone wanted whatever Schlatt had brought with him into the palace, and they needed a group to break in and steal it.

“You want us to break into the palace? Are you crazy?!” Niki nearly shouted, saying exactly what Ranboo had been thinking.

“He must be considering he’s asking us to walk right into our own executions,” Jack muttered.

“Look! I’m not saying you have to do it, I haven’t accepted the job yet. But I wanted to propose it to you guys because I think it can be done!”

“Oi! You really think we can break into the palace now of all times? Big Q, seriously, you said it yourself, there are more royals in that palace than there have ever been before. That place isn’t just heavily guarded, that place is gonna be a fucking vault,” Jack said, pushing his glasses on top of his head.

At this, Quackity smirked. “Actually, that’s just what we need. From what I hear, there’s gonna be a grand ball held near the end of the Dandelion Festival, like a send off or some shit. During that time, all the royals are going to be in attendance, meaning all the guards will be concentrated around that part of the palace. Which means…”

Fundy’s eyes widened. “The main quarters of the palace will practically be unguarded.”

“Exactly!” Quackity snapped his fingers. “Our possible contractor mentioned that as the ideal time to strike, though they also said if we find another more opportune time, that could work

as well. Our only deadline is before Schlatt leaves the kingdom.”

“What’re we getting paid?” Tubbo then piped up.

Quackity’s grin widened even more, his gold tooth glinting in the dim light of the office.

“That’s the best part about this. You’d be getting paid ten thousand Primes, *each*. With my percentage taken out of course.”

A collective gasp went up in the room. Ranboo felt his throat grow tight as he considered the possibility of getting ten thousand Primes. That was more money than Ranboo had ever seen in his life, and he was sure the sentiment was the same for the rest of them.

“What the *hell* are we grabbing that’s worth fifty thousand Primes?” Niki asked, narrowing her eyes at Quackity.

Glancing back down at the wrinkled paper on the table, Quackity sighed. “That’s where it gets a bit weird. The contractor wouldn’t tell me exactly what it was, just that there’s some special book Schlatt has that they want. They didn’t give me any information on what was inside. But they gave me a drawing of what it looks like.”

Holding up the paper, Ranboo could see a messy charcoal sketch of a book. It was large, and presumably had a heavy leather cover. Carved into the leather on the front, Ranboo could make out a faint design that almost looked like... a skull?

Shivers ran down his spine staring at the sketch. That wasn’t an ordinary book.

“For ten thousand Primes I would blow up the whole goddamn castle, I don’t care,” Tubbo declared, now grinning like a madman. “I’m totally in.”

“Tubbo my man!” Quackity cheered, holding up a hand for a high five.

“Tubbo, we haven’t decided as a group yet,” Niki cut in. “I think we need to take some time to really think this over. This job is at a scale we’ve never attempted before, and I want us to be absolutely certain before we make any final decisions.” Looking away from Tubbo, Niki then met Quackity’s eyes again. “How long till we have to confirm with the contractor?”

“We have a few days,” Quackity shrugged.

“Then I say we take those few days to see if we can form a plan. If we can get a solid outline for a plausible way to get into the palace and get out again without being caught, then we can go ahead and accept the job. But if we can’t figure out a way, then we’ll leave it to someone else,” Niki decided.

“I’m fine with that,” Jack agreed.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” Fundy chimed in.

Tubbo looked disappointed, but nodded anyway while Ranboo had no issue with the arrangement.

“Alright then, what do we need to set up first?” Jack asked, clapping his hands together.

“I think you first should all secure a way into the palace before anything else,” Quackity said, folding the paper with the sketch on it back up. “Find a servant or a guard that you can bribe, someone who knows the ins and outs of the palace and can tell you where to go.”

“I’m making a delivery to the palace tomorrow for Hannah, I can look around and see if I can find anyone then?” Tubbo suggested, referring to the blacksmith he apprenticed for during the day.

“I dunno, Tubbo, you’re not exactly subtle,” Fundy pointed out.

“I can be subtle if I want to!” Tubbo protested.

There was a beat of silence as Niki and Quackity both considered Tubbo, before Niki sighed and nodded. “Fine, yeah. I can’t think of another way any of us are going to get into the palace unless they suddenly decide to order some cakes. Try to be subtle and make sure to wait and watch before approaching anyone.”

“You got it, Niki!” Tubbo said, saluting at her.

“Now that that’s settled, then we need to figure out part two: when is the night of the ball?” Quackity asked.

“I can probably find out. Just gotta hang around the right people,” Fundy told them.

“Alright then, we’ll meet back here tomorrow night and report what we’ve found out,” Niki declared.

And with that, the decision had been made. While they hadn’t accepted the job yet, they were going to start planning for it as if they had. As the group grabbed their empty bags and left Quackity’s office, acid crawled up Ranboo’s throat and threatened to choke him.

He had a bad feeling about this. Of course, he had a bad feeling about most jobs they took, the constant anxiety that gnawed at his insides really not happy with his choice in career. But Ranboo had a worse feeling about this than most jobs. Maybe it was just because they were breaking into the royal palace of all places, but Ranboo kept thinking back to that book, and how unnerved he’d been just looking at a drawing of it.

No one would pay fifty thousand Primes for a normal book. If they were being told to steal something like a crown or a priceless necklace, Ranboo would get it. But to get paid that much to steal a book? Ranboo knew there had to be some kind of magic attached to it.

The group was quiet as they padded down the cobblestone streets, leaving the casino behind as they headed towards their neighborhood. Very few people roamed the streets at this hour, and the few people they passed by kept their heads down and didn’t stare at them for too long.

A cool breeze blew through the streets, ruffling Ranboo’s hair and pushing Niki’s hood off her head. Next to him, Tubbo shivered, and Ranboo wrapped an arm around him to keep the

chill at bay until they got back to his home.

Fundy and Jack peeled off from the group first, both of them turning towards a busy pub and waving as they disappeared inside. Clearly the two weren't tired enough to sleep yet.

Then, Tubbo was next, reluctantly detaching himself from Ranboo's side as he trudged up the steps to the blacksmith shop, keys jangling loudly as he struggled to unlock the door. He waved at him and Niki once the lock clicked open, and hurried inside to the promise of warmth.

Now, Niki and Ranboo were alone. They walked in silence, their boots clicking against the cobblestones in perfect harmony. It was only a few more shops until they reached the bakery, and Niki took the keys out of her cloak as she opened up the door.

The bakery was dark, the smell of sugar still heavy in the air from the day's baking. Niki and Ranboo silently weaved between the chairs and tables set up inside, heading towards the back room that had been converted to a small apartment the both of them shared.

Inside the back room, there were two small beds on opposite walls. Ranboo beelined for the bed on the left side, collapsing onto the thin mattress and sighing as his aching joints finally got a break. He heard Niki shut the door quietly, glancing at the ceiling to listen and make sure they hadn't woken the bakery owner up.

A few seconds passed, and when no footsteps were heard, Niki and Ranboo both breathed sighs of relief.

"Well, that was an interesting night, wouldn't you say?" Niki said, sitting on the edge of her own bed and pulling off her boots.

Interesting. Yeah. That was one way to put it.

"Are you really going to accept the job?" Ranboo asked, rolling onto his side to look at Niki.

Niki paused while unlacing her boots. "Maybe. I haven't made a decision yet," she told him, resuming her unlacing after a moment.

Ranboo watched as she pulled a knife out of the side of her shoe, setting it on the bed next to her before yanking off the boot entirely. Then, she did the same with the other shoe, pulling out two more knives as she did so.

"You can't seriously think this is a good idea," Ranboo said, awkwardly holding his leg above his head so he could try to get his own boots off without sitting up.

"I mean..." Niki sighed, tucking a pink strand of hair behind her ear, "ten thousand Primes is a lot of money."

"Yeah, because it's a suicide mission," Ranboo pointed out, grunting as one of his boots went flying across the room.

“But Quackity has a point,” Niki argued, “if all the guards are gonna be focused on the ball, then it’s not impossible for us to break into Schlatt’s quarters and steal that book.”

“I get that, but it’s still a huge risk.”

“I know it is,” Niki muttered. “I’m just... this kind of opportunity doesn’t come along often. Hell, it possibly only comes along once in a lifetime. Do you know what we could do with ten thousand Primes? With our combined twenty thousand?”

Ranboo paused trying to get his second shoe off, and straightened up to a normal sitting position so he could look at Niki directly.

“We could move out of this stupid storage room for one thing,” Niki told him, gesturing around. “I could start my own bakery, and you could actually go to the Royal Academy and learn enchanting for real instead of just what you find in those old books. We could actually have futures to look forward to, instead of just waiting for the next job to roll around. We wouldn’t be stuck here like we are now.”

Niki grew quiet, staring at the floor as she wrung her hands in her lap. Sighing, Ranboo stood up from his bed and walked across to Niki’s, sitting down beside her and wrapping an arm around her shoulder.

“That sounds pretty nice,” Ranboo admitted.

“I just... I know I haven’t been the best sister to you, Ranboo. I wish I hadn’t gotten you involved in this stuff in the first place, but I want you to be able to get out,” Niki said softly.

“What? Niki, don’t say that,” Ranboo protested, squeezing her shoulders. “You’ve been amazing. No one else would’ve taken in a random enderman hybrid kid, let alone when you were barely off the streets yourself.”

“I wasn’t going to just leave you there, don’t be ridiculous,” Niki told him, a wet laugh escaping her. “Just... I was so angry when I was fifteen, so angry at how unfair everything was. How those rich noble bastards get to flaunt their gold and hold it over our heads while kids struggle to find their next meals. I wanted to do something, and I dragged you into it with me.” Then, she sighed. “I didn’t think I’d be doing it for this long though.”

“I don’t blame you for that, Niki. You did what you had to,” Ranboo reassured her. “And anyway, at least the welfare programs got a bit better when Dream was crowned.”

“True, he’s better than the last king,” Niki agreed, picking at her nails. “Still... I want more for us. All of us. You, me, Jack, Fundy, and Tubbo. And if we take this job, we can do it.”

“I’m still not sure,” Ranboo confessed softly. “I’m just scared something’s gonna go wrong, and then I might lose one of you guys.”

Reaching over, Niki grabbed Ranboo’s hand and squeezed it. “That’s not going to happen, Ranboo.” There was a fire in her eyes as she promised him that, and Ranboo knew that when Niki said something in that tone, she meant it.

After a moment though, the fire faded and she smiled again.

“Besides, we haven’t agreed to it yet. Let’s see if Tubbo can find a servant to bribe first tomorrow, because if he can’t then the whole thing is off anyway,” Niki laughed.

Nodding, Ranboo returned the smile with a shaky one of his own. “Yeah, good point. Tubbo’s about as subtle as a gun, so I’m interested to see what he turns up with.”

Niki snorted. “Yeah, sounds about right.”

Giving Niki one last squeeze around the shoulders, Ranboo stood back up and moved back to his own bed. They were both getting tired, he could tell, and he knew Niki had to be up early for the morning shift at the bakery.

The two of them got ready to sleep in silence. They took turns in the bathroom, both changing out of their all black clothes and into pajamas, Ranboo trying not to think of that book while Niki brushed her hair out on her bed.

Soon, they were both settled into their beds, and Niki turned out the light. Shadows engulfed the room, and Ranboo closed his eyes so his already on edge imagination didn’t start seeing shapes in the darkness.

“Goodnight, Ranboo,” Niki called out into the dark.

“Night Niki,” Ranboo replied, rolling onto his side away from her.

That night, Ranboo didn’t dream, and for that he was grateful.

## Chapter End Notes

I promise Tommy is gonna show up next chapter lol so just hold on for him

so here we are! I decided to make Niki and Ranboo adoptive siblings because I think that headcanon is adorable. for context, Niki took Ranboo in when she was 15 and he was 12, and it's been about four years since then

also primes are the currency of this world! I'm not doing any conversions to irl money so I'm not saying primes are worth like \$5 or whatever like what they are on twitch, just know that fifty thousand primes is a *lot* in this world

anyway, more details about the world and where everyone fits in will be revealed later, but I hope you've enjoyed what I have so far! Let me know in the comments what you thought, they really make my day <3



# a chance meeting

## Chapter Summary

Tommy is bored during a trade negotiations meeting, so he decides to wander off.

## Chapter Notes

hey guys next chapter already! I already had this typed up when I posted yesterday so I decided to post this one today, just so we can have two chapters already up

don't have much to say about this chapter except we finally get to see tommy so look forward to that! hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy was certain he'd never been so bored out of his mind in his life.

"If we set up a new trading post near the ravine, we'll be able to expedite the import of iron ore into your country tenfold," Wilbur was saying as he walked around the meeting room, his long coat billowing out behind him with every step. "Providing a rest stop in such a dangerous location will allow for the caravans to rest and repair, and they'll be able to carry more iron as a result."

Tommy was severely regretting asking to come along to this alliance meeting in the first place. He thought it would be interesting, talking about wars or the military or things like that. But so far, Dream and Wilbur had just been discussing making alterations to their trade routes, with Phil chiming in every so often.

"I agree that a trading post is a good idea, but setting one up near the ravine will be difficult. Why not set one up in the valley? It would be a bit further of a trek from your side, but we'd be able to establish a much larger outpost than we would near the ravine," Dream replied, leaning his arms against the large map table that sat in the center of the room.

They were in some kind of conference room. It was a large, open space with vaulted ceilings and huge windows that bathed everyone in afternoon sunlight. In the center of the room was a large glass table with a map of the continent spread across it, which Wilbur and Dream were both circling around as they spoke. Beyond the table, there was a circle of chairs, which was where Wilbur and Dream had both originally been sitting before they both got up to pace while they talked.

Most of the others were still sitting in the circle. Phil was settled next to Wil's empty seat, hands folded neatly in his lap as he watched the discussion, only chiming in every so often. Next to Dream's empty seat was his advisor, George. While Tommy couldn't see his eyes because of the goggles he wore, the more Tommy watched, the more he became convinced George had fallen asleep. He hadn't moved in nearly twenty minutes, and Tommy was almost tempted to push him over to wake him up.

Elsewhere in the circle was Eret, a long skirt swishing around the heavy boots he wore as he shifted in his seat, pushing his dark glasses a bit further up his nose. He, like Phil, was also paying close attention to the proceedings, even though currently the discussion wasn't anything related to his own kingdom. Next to him, his advisor—Foolish—was watching as well, although he seemed a bit bored and Tommy couldn't blame him.

The only person in the room who seemed more bored than Tommy though was Schlatt. The ram-hybrid was slouched down in his seat, arms folded across his chest as he watched the discussion with glazed eyes. His suit was wrinkled, and his beard certainly looked like it needed a trim. Tommy may have been bored, but at least he had the decency to make himself look presentable for this. Schlatt probably rolled straight out of bed to come to this thing.

Tommy shifted in his own seat, and grimaced when the movement reminded him of the stiff coat that sat on his shoulders. Lined with gold clasps and padded in the shoulders to make him look more filled out, Tommy hated having to wear the thing. It was tight, hot, and impossible to run around in. Thankfully, he'd already complained about the thing to Phil, who was having the tailors make him a better fitting one. Until then though, he was stuck having to wear it.

Glancing back up, Tommy watched Wilbur point to a few spots on the map, while Dream leaned over to see where he was pointing. Watching Dream, Tommy wondered for the thousandth time how he managed to see through the mask on his face. It was a smooth porcelain disk that covered everything except the very bottom of his chin, with a smiley face carved into the front.

While Tommy understood that in Dream's kingdom the mask was their version of a crown, he really didn't get the point of it. Why was almost no one allowed to ever see the monarch's face? According to Techno, the only people who got to see Dream's face were the people he was absolutely closest to. Otherwise, he wore the mask at all times.

Personally, Tommy thought it was weird and that it must be hard to trust a king whose face you never saw. But he'd been lectured on how since he was a prince now he was a representative of the Antarctic Empire, and shouldn't talk bad about the cultural customs of the kingdom that was hosting them.

The topic of the trade outpost dragged on, and Tommy had to bite back a groan. He was getting antsy sitting in here. His foot tapped at the marble floor, restless energy humming through his body like a livewire.

There was a nudge at his side, and Tommy glanced over to see Techno raising an eyebrow at him.

“You bored?” Techno whispered.

“Uh, I sure as hell am,” Tommy whispered back, glancing at Wilbur to make sure he wasn’t looking at the two of them. The last thing he needed was Wilbur shooting him a dirty look for not paying attention to his ‘very important’ discussion on trade.

“You know you, like, don’t have to stay here, right?”

Tommy blinked. “I don’t?”

“No, you don’t. You can literally leave any time you want,” Techno explained, nudging Tommy’s shoulder with his own.

“But I thought that I was ‘representing the Empire’ or whatever and that once I was here I couldn’t leave?” Tommy questioned.

“I mean, you can’t go off and be an asshole to a bunch of people, that’d look pretty bad for us. But Phil and Wil are here, they’re the real representatives at this meeting. You and I are basically just decoration,” Techno shrugged.

“Then why don’t you leave with me?” Tommy suggested. “We could go spar!”

“Unfortunately while I’m not here to say anything, since I’m the General and all I technically gotta know what goes on in these meetings,” Techno grumbled, shaking his head. “But I think I might take a page out of George’s book and take a nap,” he continued, jerking his chin towards George who had now started to slip down in his seat.

Tommy snickered and patted Techno’s shoulder. “Alright then, you have fun with that. I’m gonna go get into trouble.”

“Try not to cause an international relations scandal. If you do you might give Wilbur a stroke,” Techno deadpanned, his gaze sliding back to where Wilbur was now practically sitting on the map as he gestured wildly around.

Giving Techno a salute in reply, Tommy quietly stood up from his seat, grateful they were sitting at the back of the room. He felt a few curious pairs of eyes on him as he darted to the door, but no one said anything as he opened the door just a crack, and slipped out of the conference room.

As the door clicked shut behind him, Tommy breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, he was free.

Tommy took a step into the hallway away from the conference room, when a voice spoke behind him.

“Prince Theseus, is everything alright?”

Whirling around, Tommy relaxed when he saw it was just Sam guarding the door to the conference room. While Tommy and his family hadn’t been in Essempee for very long, he’d already gotten to know as much of Dream’s court as he could.

Sam was one of his favorite people to talk to. The creeper hybrid looked intimidating as hell with his gas mask and black eyes, but he was actually a relatively friendly guy, and Tommy loved watching him spar with Techno.

“Sam, my guy, I dunno how many times I have to tell you but just call me Tommy,” Tommy told him, shoving his hands in his pockets.

Sam chuckled. “Sorry Tommy, force of habit. Was everything alright in there?”

“Yeah, everything was fine. Just boring as hell so I decided to leave,” Tommy explained.

“Makes sense, those meetings can be pretty dry,” Sam agreed, the corners of his eyes crinkling up as he smiled under his mask. “What are you gonna do while everyone else is in the meeting though?”

“I dunno. Maybe explore the palace a bit? See if I can find any secret passages,” Tommy said, winking at Sam.

“Like I’ve told you before, there are no secret passages in the palace,” Sam reminded him.

“Sureeeeeee,” Tommy drawled out, grinning at Sam as he headed back down the hall.

“Anyway, I got places to be, women to see. I’ll catch you later, Sam!”

“Bye Tommy,” Sam said, waving as he turned the corner.

Now out of sight of Sam, Tommy hurried down the hallway toward the guest wing of the palace. The tight coat was chafing at his arms, and sweat was starting to pool at the back of his neck. Dream’s kingdom was much warmer than the Empire was, and while wandering around in long coats and thick socks was common back at home, here Tommy had to get used to lighter clothes.

Surprisingly, the clothes had been one of the hardest parts of Tommy’s transition to being royal. Growing up, his clothes had always been hand me downs or discarded scraps he’d dug out of trash cans. Thin t-shirts dotted with holes, oversized coats that let icy breezes pass right through him, and damp shoes that were always falling apart.

Now though, his clothes were warm, thick, and (usually) tailored to fit him perfectly. Most of the time the expensive clothes were really nice, a reminder that he was never going to have to deal with frostbite or blue lips ever again. But sometimes, when the clothes were too heavy, too unfamiliar, it made Tommy feel like he was wearing a costume. The costume of Prince Theseus, and not the clothes of Tommy.

So naturally, Tommy’s first order of business upon escaping the meeting was to run to his room and change.

An attendant nodded at him as he entered his room, and he sent a small wave at the man as he shut the door behind him. As soon as the door was closed, Tommy twisted out of his coat, cursing under his breath as he struggled to pull his arms out of the tight sleeves. Technically

he could call the attendant outside to help him out of it, but Tommy knew how to take his own damn clothes off thank you very much.

After a few moments of cursing and twisting, Tommy finally threw the coat across his bed and breathed a sigh of relief. Then, he walked over to his closet and dug around for the most casual seeming clothes he could find.

He switched out of the fancy silk blouse he'd been forced to wear under his coat for a plain tunic, and then battled with his heavy, shining black boots to yank them off his feet. Two boots thrown at the wall later, he exchanged them for his broken-in leather boots and quickly laced them up.

When Tommy went out on explorations around the palace like this, the goal was not to look like a prince. If he walked around looking like a prince, the servants that passed by him would always pause and watch him with wide eyes, asking over and over if there was anything he needed. Oddly enough, Tommy had noticed they were much more casual with their own king. Sometimes a servant might ask Dream if he needed anything when he was walking down the hall, but for the most part they would simply smile or nod at him as he passed. The formality only existed with the foreign royals that were staying there. Hence, why Tommy had discarded all of his royal clothing in favor of more normal-looking clothes.

Tommy left his room again, nodding at the attendant who raised an eyebrow at his casual dress, but didn't comment as he turned down the hall. His boots thumped softly against the plush rug that stretched down the guest wing hallway, and Tommy tried to think of where in the palace he hadn't been yet before.

He'd already woven between the towering shelves of the library, gotten himself lost in the hedge maze of the gardens, and he'd found secret ways to sneak into both of his brothers' rooms. While he could try to search for secret passages like he told Sam, he really wasn't sure where to start looking. If he really wanted to be a little shit he could try to sneak into Dream's throne room, but that might count as 'causing an international relations scandal'.

Suddenly, Tommy's stomach growled.

Kitchen it was then.

Beelining for the stairwell, Tommy was already thinking about what he could ask the kitchen staff to make for him. Maybe he could ask for some pastries, or maybe he could see if they had any of that really good noodle soup they'd had the first night they arrived here.

So lost in thought about food, Tommy didn't notice the person walking towards him until he ran right into them.

"Oh shit, sorry about that!" Tommy apologized, taking a step back after slamming into the person's shoulder.

A head of wild brown and white curls framed by sheep's horns turned towards him, and he was met with Puffy's warm smile.

“Wow, I’m really that short that you don’t see me right in front of you?” Puffy joked, smirking at him.

“Well, maybe you should consider being taller,” Tommy shot back.

Puffy rolled her eyes. “Man, why haven’t I thought of that! You’re right, Tommy. Tomorrow when you see me again, I’ll be taller than you are.”

“You can’t be taller than me. I’m the biggest man there is!”

“Oh, right, my bad. I’ll be close to your height then.”

Laughing, Tommy was reminded of why he liked Puffy so much. She was the Admiral of Dream’s Navy, and was usually stationed out on the water. But she had been called back for the Dandelion Festival, and Tommy was grateful for that because she was one of the only fun people in this entire palace.

“So why aren’t you at that meeting you were telling me all about yesterday?” Puffy asked once they had stopped laughing.

“I was, but it was boring as hell. Seriously, Puffy, I thought I was gonna keel over if I had to hear Wilbur say ‘caravan speed’ one more time,” Tommy explained.

“Wow, sounds exactly like the thing to keep you on the edge of your seat,” Puffy drawled, the sarcasm dripping from her voice. “Why do you think I wasn’t there? I’ve been stuck in those meetings before and every time I’m convinced I can feel my cells dying.”

“God, exactly. I’m so glad I’m not in line for the throne. I’d go mad if I had to sit through those things all the time.”

“Yeah, it’s definitely convenient you have two brothers ahead of you,” Puffy laughed.

“Speaking of Wilbur and Techno, are they both still in the meeting?”

“Yup. I’m pretty sure Wilbur’s having the time of his life, but Techno told me he was gonna try and take a nap when I left.”

Puffy nodded. “I should go rescue him then. I need to talk to him, Admiral to General if you get what I mean.”

Tommy’s eyes widened with understanding. “Oh, yeah, of course. I’m sure he’d love to get out of that meeting.” Pausing, Tommy gnawed on his lip debating if he could ask the question burning in his mind. “Uh... you wouldn’t be able to tell me-”

“No, I can’t tell you what I wanna talk to him about,” Puffy said, cutting him off. “Don’t worry though, it’s just more stuff about expanding the Essempee and Antarctic Empire alliance. All good stuff.”

Deflating, Tommy nodded. “Okay then,” he muttered. That was the exact kind of stuff he’d wanted to hear about when he went to the meeting earlier today. Not stupid trade routes, but all the cool stuff! While he was tempted to argue that he certainly could be privy to that

conversation, he also knew it wasn't his place to argue with Puffy. However, he was definitely going to bug the hell out of Techno later tonight to learn what was going on.

"Hey, don't feel bad. You'll get to learn all this secret stuff soon, when you're a little older," she reassured him. "Here, take this before I go." Reaching into her pocket, Puffy pulled out a handful of small, individually wrapped toffees, and pressed a few into Tommy's hand.

"Thanks Puffy," Tommy grinned, unwrapping one to pop in his mouth.

"No problem. I'll see you later, Tommy!" Puffy said, before turning to walk down the way Tommy had just come.

A warm, rich sweetness exploded on Tommy's tongue as he chewed the toffee. He gnawed at the candy as he made his way to the stairs, through the grand foyer to the palace and towards the kitchen.

By the time he cracked open the door to the kitchens themselves, he'd finished the toffee, but was convinced there was a piece of it stuck in his teeth. Oh well, he'd have to sort that out later. For now, he had lunch to get.

The kitchen was a scene of chaos. Flour floated in the air like snow as bakers tossed sticky piles of dough onto counters for kneading. Different servants rushed in and out of the room, bringing with them crystalline glasses and silver platters for serving. The smell of roasted meat, rich and mouthwatering, circled through the air from large pots of stew cooking on stoves. There was a constant *snap snap snap!* thudding in the background of the clatter and footsteps, from chefs who were chopping up stacks of vibrant green vegetables in rapid succession.

Tommy squeezed through the kitchen door, pressing himself against the wall as a servant carrying a large tray passed by. Surprisingly, no one looked twice at him, and Tommy suspected it was because the only servants who had actually seen his face were the attendants posted near his room. Without his 'fancy' clothes, no one had any idea who he was.

Which meant, no one was going to pay any attention to him.

Which *meant*, Tommy could give into his inner raccoon and swipe himself some lunch.

It hadn't even been a full year since Tommy had been pulled off the streets and adopted by Phil. While he loved his family and the new comforts he had access to, there was also something he sorely missed about successfully stealing something. Back when he had been living on his own, he didn't have a choice about stealing. If he didn't swipe food, he would've starved. But there had always been a bit of enjoyment in the mischief he was able to cause. The confused stare someone had when they realized their bread roll was gone, the frustration when someone's leftovers completely disappeared from their bag. It helped him get food to eat, but even better, it was funny.

Now, Tommy didn't have much chance to steal. Sure, he would swipe things every so often in the palace back home. Tiny things, like discarded letter openers or a nearly melted candle. But it wasn't really *stealing* because no one got mad at him for it. Maybe Phil or Wilbur

would scold him, but none of the attendants were able to scold him. There was no confusion, no anger. It wasn't entertaining anymore.

Although Tommy wasn't technically stealing anything from this kitchen because it wasn't like he had to pay for the food anyway, it would still cause confusion. And that would be enough to sate his craving for mischief. Hopefully.

No one glanced at him twice as he stepped away from the wall and into the kitchen itself. He passed by a tray of golden bread rolls, the steam rolling off of them telling Tommy they'd just been taken out of the oven. As he passed, his hand darted out to take one, and a burning pain immediately shot through his hand. Refusing to drop the bread through, Tommy shoved it in his pocket, cursing himself for not thinking about how hot 'fresh out of the oven' meant.

Shaking off his stinging hand, Tommy then strolled by one of the chefs that was chopping vegetables. There were three un-chopped carrots sitting next to the cutting board. As the chef paused to talk to another servant, Tommy quickly swiped one of the carrots and put it in his pocket next to the bread roll.

Then, deciding to push his luck, he also grabbed a dull butter knife as well, sliding it up his sleeve to hide it better. Did he need a butter knife? No, not at all. But it was there and he could grab it and no one was looking, so what else was he going to do? Just leave it?

All in all, very smooth, very cool. Total success.

Looking around the room, Tommy tried to see what else he could nab before leaving the kitchen. However, the only other things that seemed to be being made at the moment was either bread dough—which he certainly didn't need—and stew—which he couldn't exactly shove in his pocket.

Just as he was debating making a second loop to grab another bread roll, a woman marched toward him with a scowl on her face.

"What do you think you're doin'?!" She demanded in a shrill voice.

Tommy's eyes widened. He'd been caught. Shit. Explaining why a prince was stealing food from the kitchen was going to be awkward.

"Oh, uh, I'm sorry I just—"

"This ain't a place for lollygagging, kid. We're expecting a delivery of spatulas from the blacksmith any minute now. Go hurry up and meet 'em at the gate and bring the delivery back here," the woman ordered, pointing to the backdoor of the kitchen.

*Oh.* She thought he was part of the staff.

Tommy briefly considered explaining himself to the woman, but when he saw the fierce glint in her eye, he decided that maybe he was better off just doing what she told him.

"Yup, sorry ma'am, I'll do that right now," Tommy gulped, nodding at her.



The woman shooed him off and he beelined for the back door. All he had to do was meet the blacksmith to pick up the delivery, huh? That couldn't be too hard.

Stepping out the backdoor, Tommy was hit with a blast of warm summer air. Sunshine was beating down in the courtyard of the palace, reflecting off the pale bricks that paved the ground and blinding Tommy temporarily. Blinking a few times to regain his sight, Tommy slowly made his way across the courtyard, squinting to make out the large gate that sat at the opposite end.

The bread roll and the carrot bounced in his pocket with every step, and Tommy knew by the time he actually got a chance to eat them the bread was going to be completely smashed and the carrot was probably going to be warm, and everyone knew warm carrots were disgusting. At least he still had the butter knife shoved up his sleeve. What was he going to do with it? He had no idea! But he had it, and that was what counted.

As he got closer to the gate, Tommy's eyes adjusted to the brightness, and soon he was able to make out a small figure standing behind the bars. It was a boy, shorter than him with messy brown hair that almost completely covered his eyes, and two short horns sticking out from the sides of his head. In his arms he held a bundle of cloth, which Tommy guessed were the spatulas he was delivering.

Right as Tommy approached, the guard at the gate stepped aside to let the boy in.

"Hey, you delivering for the blacksmith?" Tommy asked, eyeing the bundle he was carrying.

"Sure am!" The boy replied cheerfully as he entered the gated courtyard. "A new set of steel spatulas, ready for cooking," he said, holding out the bundle.

Reaching out, Tommy took the bundle from the boy, grunting at the weight of the metal inside. He readjusted his arms, trying to get a better grip on the bundle, when he heard a loud clattering against the ground. The boy and him both glanced down, where Tommy's useless butter knife was resting on the brick.

"Was that in your sleeve?" The boy asked, frowning at him.

Heat flooded to Tommy's cheeks, and instead of answering, he turned around to rush back to the kitchens. While he hoped the boy would take the hint and leave, instead he heard footsteps clapping against the brick behind him, and bit back a sigh.

"That was in your sleeve, wasn't it? You were trying to steal that knife!" The boy pointed out, now grinning like a madman.

"Shut up!" Tommy hissed, whipping around to look at the boy. "I wasn't *stealing* it. I was just... holding onto it."

"Uh huh. Why would you need to hold onto a butter knife?" The boy questioned.

"What's it to you?" Tommy snapped. "You gonna go tell the kitchen staff I tried to steal a stupid butter knife now?"

“Hey, chill out, man. I was just curious,” the boy said, holding up his hands in surrender as he continued to follow Tommy. “Anyway, if you’re gonna try and swipe a knife like that again, make sure you’re wearing sleeves with a tighter cuff. That way there’s less of a chance of it falling out like that. But make sure the sleeves themselves aren’t tight, or else people will be able to see the outline against your arm.”

Frowning, Tommy stopped walking again. “You seem rather experienced in this field.”

The boy shrugged. “You live and you learn, y’know? Anyway, the little guys like us gotta stick together.”

“I’m not little!” Tommy protested. “I’m way taller than you!”

The boy groaned. “I didn’t mean it like that, dumbass.”

Huffing, Tommy continued marching towards the kitchen, ignoring the boy following him. Once he got to the backdoor, he debated going all the way inside to report back to the woman and tell her he picked up the delivery, but if he did that she might give him another assignment and he’d never be able to escape. So instead, Tommy cracked open the backdoor to the kitchen and carefully set the bundle on the nearest counter, before he darted back into the courtyard.

As the door shut behind him, Tommy turned around to see the boy still watching him.

“How long have you been stealing for?” The boy asked, folding his arms across his chest.

“Most of my life. I’ve just gotten a bit rusty recently,” Tommy shrugged, knowing he wouldn’t have made a mistake like that a year ago.

“I can tell. That bread roll in your pocket is about to fall out and you didn’t even notice,” the boy said, gesturing to Tommy’s pants.

Hand flying to his pocket, Tommy realized the boy was right and cursed under his breath. He pulled the bread roll out completely, shoulders sagging when he saw how smashed it had gotten from his pocket.

“Dammit, that’s my lunch,” he muttered.

“That’s why you gotta use a bag, big man,” the boy told him. “Guess it’s a good thing you’re out of practice though. I’d imagine that means working at the palace pays pretty well.”

Oh yeah. Tommy was posing as staff right now.

“Eh, yeah, it pays decently,” Tommy shrugged, because he had no idea how much it paid to work at the palace.

Suddenly, the boy’s eyes lit up, and that madman grin returned.

“You looking to earn a holiday bonus?” The boy asked.

...huh?

“Uh, what do you mean?” Tommy questioned, wondering what this boy was offering him.

“It means there might be an opportunity for you to earn some extra coin, especially if you’re looking to get back into practice with swiping stuff,” the boy told him, his grin wicked sharp.

*Oh.* This boy wasn’t just a blacksmith’s apprentice who had some sleight of hand skills, he was a full blown thief.

Tommy had known people like that back in the Empire. Those who made a living off of their specialized skill sets. While he’d tried to get involved with a few of the groups back when he lived on the streets, most of them weren’t willing to take on someone as young as he was. But it seemed that this boy hadn’t had that issue.

“What’s the opportunity?” Tommy asked, curiosity overriding his logic.

“Can’t tell you details. Gotta make sure we can trust you first. Tonight, around 11, can you get out of the palace? I’ll wait outside the gates and I can tell you more then,” the boy asked him.

Tommy blinked. It shouldn’t be too hard to sneak out after most of the people in the palace were sleeping. If anything he could just tell the guards he was going for a midnight stroll. He was a prince after all, he was allowed to do that, right?

“Yeah, I can slip away,” Tommy told him.

“Great! I’m Tubbo by the way,” the boy introduced, holding out a hand to shake.

“I’m Tommy,” Tommy replied, knowing this wasn’t the time to introduce himself with his official title.

“Nice to meet you, Tommy. I’ll meet you here at 11, got it?”

For the first time this whole conversation, Tommy grinned. Finally, something exciting was happening.

“Sounds good to me.”

## Chapter End Notes

I promise we'll get more sbi interaction next chapter lol this chapter was mostly just tommy being a gremlin

anyway I hope you guys enjoyed! not sure when the next chapter will be posted but hopefully I'll be able to get it done soon. please let me know what you think of this fic in the comments, they really make my day <3



# how to escape a palace

## Chapter Summary

Tommy tries to figure out how he's going to get out of the palace

## Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I'm back!

Sorry this took so long to update, in all honesty this chapter as it was planned turned out to be 12k words so it took me ages to finish, but I decided to split it into two. Don't worry though, I'm going to post the other half tomorrow because not a lot of major plot stuff happens in this one, and I don't want you guys to have to wait for the exciting stuff lol (not to mention I didn't update last week, so think of this as a double update as repayment)

anywayyyy thanks so much for the love you've given this fic already, I hope you enjoy this chapter and keep your eyes peeled for the next one tomorrow!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After his conversation with Tubbo, Tommy made his way back to his room with a new spring in his step.

He was so excited. While he had no idea what Tubbo had in store for him, something told him it was going to be good. Tommy liked Tubbo despite knowing him for such a short period of time. The boy reminded him of himself, especially back when he had been living on the streets. Tubbo clearly knew what it took to survive out in the real world, without the luxuries that came with being at the top of the food chain. It was an experience very few others in this palace could relate to Tommy with.

When he had left Tubbo at the gate, Tommy had beelined back for the kitchen, scurrying through with his head down to avoid the scary woman from before. From there, he had hurried to his room, wanting time to plan out exactly how he was going to sneak out to meet Tubbo that night.

Yeah, that was another issue. While Tommy had agreed to meet Tubbo at 11, he wasn't actually sure how he was going to do it. He didn't see why he wouldn't be allowed to leave, but for activities such as this, it might be better not to be seen as Prince Theseus when

sneaking out at night. If he couldn't use his royal sway to get the guards to let him out, he was going to have to figure out how to get through that gate.

He might have to scale the fences that lined the courtyard of the palace. While he could probably do it, he wasn't sure how well-patrolled the border of the fence was. And if he was caught by guards sneaking out of the palace, not wearing his own royal clothing to signify who he was, he could end up getting thrown in a prison cell. *That* would certainly be a hard thing to explain to his family.

If things really got dicey, Tommy had a plan on the back burner to ask Puffy for any tips on how to get out. Unlike most of the adults around him, she was always up for some mischief, and likely wouldn't have an issue with helping him sneak out of the palace. He could just lie and tell her he had met some friends in the kingdom and he wanted to hang out with them. That way, if she said no, at least he could convince her not to tell anyone else he had asked about sneaking out. The last thing he needed was Wilbur giving him the third degree about that.

Wilbur was great, but he was also a stupidly overprotective bitch.

Speaking of Wilbur, when Tommy finally made it back to his room, he opened the door and found said brother in question stretched across his bed with his arms spread out beside him.

"Tommy!" Wilbur greeted, bolting upright at Tommy's entrance. "How was exploring the palace? Did you find any secret passageways yet?"

"How'd you know I was exploring the palace?" Tommy asked, shutting the door behind him as he walked over to sit down next to Wilbur.

"Once the meeting ended I asked Sam where you went, and that's what he told me," Wilbur explained.

"Oh, got it. Yeah, no secret passageways sadly," Tommy shrugged, trying to feign disappointment over the excitement still bubbling in his chest. "I would say sorry for leaving early, but it was so fucking boring, I'm pretty sure I would've gone into a coma if I stayed much longer."

Wilbur mock gasped in offense. "It's not that boring! We were discussing important things regarding our trade agreement!"

"You really think I give a shit about trade agreements?" Tommy asked, raising an eyebrow at Wilbur.

"This is why I'm the next in line for the throne and not you or Techno. You gotta be able to stomach the boring shit," Wilbur teased, bumping his shoulder with Tommy's.

"Yeah, and also you're the oldest. That's how it works, dumbass," Tommy snarked.

"I mean, technically, Techno and I don't know which of us is the older twin," Wilbur said with a shrug. "But it's definitely me, even if Techno says otherwise."

“Alright, big man. If you say so,” Tommy replied, leaning back against the bed.

Rolling his eyes, Wilbur fell back onto the bed beside him, stretching his arms out behind Tommy’s head.

“God, it’s probably a good thing you left the meeting early anyway. That fucking ram bastard started some shit later on and I probably wouldn’t have been able to keep my temper with you egging me on,” Wilbur told him, the smile fading from his voice as he stared at the ceiling.

“Wait, what happened with Schlatt?” Tommy asked, turning onto his side to look at Wilbur.

“After Dream and I stopped talking about Essempee and the Empire’s trade routes, we moved onto talking about establishing some new trade agreements with L’Man- I mean *Manberg*. But the way from Essempee to Manberg isn’t a short journey, so we were trying to figure out what the safest route for caravans to take would be. Schlatt got pissy though when he heard how long the average caravan would take, and said we could just cut through the mountains. Like that wouldn’t get every fucking caravan that passed through it killed,” Wilbur explained, his voice rising the longer he spoke.

“The mountain range there has barely been explored, and for good reason. It’s a goddamn nightmare of cliffs and uneven ground. Going around is literally the only safe way to travel to Manberg from here, but Schlatt kept saying it was too long. I pointed out how it was gonna take even longer if the caravans kept dying on the way, but Schlatt said a few sacrifices were necessary to carve out a path! Like, he straight up said he didn’t care if some of his citizens died trying to go through the path as long as they got their trade. Can you fucking believe it?!”

Huffing, Wilbur brought his hands up to his face, dragging them down his cheeks.

“I just... he doesn’t care about his citizens at all, Tommy. He only won that damn election through a loophole. I think the only reason he even ran was because he wanted the power, but didn’t understand the first thing about running a nation,” Wilbur then mumbled between his fingers.

“The guy sounds like a real prick,” Tommy muttered, frowning at Wilbur. “Can’t we just, like, overthrow him or some shit?”

“It’s not that simple,” Wilbur said, shaking his head. “We were allied with L’Manberg before the election, and as of now that alliance still stands. Running a hostile takeover would not only be a declaration of war, but it would violate our alliance with L’Manberg, *and* the Empire’s alliance with Essempee and Angia. If we wanted to usurp Schlatt, Dream and Eret would both also have to agree that there is probable cause for such a drastic action. And so far, while Schlatt acts like a dick, he technically hasn’t done anything that counts as a major ethics violation.”

Tommy was silent for a moment, thinking over everything Wilbur had said.

“Okay, you just said a lot of words, some of which I didn’t really understand. But from what I got, we basically can’t overthrow Schlatt because of a bunch of bureaucratic bullshit, right?” Tommy asked.

Snorting, Wilbur nodded. “Yeah, that’s basically it.”

“I have no fucking clue how you deal with that. All that bureaucratic tape would drive me absolutely nuts,” Tommy then said.

Beside him, Wilbur sighed and also rolled onto his side to face Tommy. Then, he reached out to pull Tommy closer to him, and Tommy didn’t resist as Wilbur buried his face in his hair. Like always, his Nether-born brother was hot to the touch, but it seemed like he was even warmer than usual. Like there was a furnace sitting under his skin, simmering and waiting for a spark.

“It’s so goddamn tiring, Toms,” Wilbur said softly, voice muffled from where it was pressed against Tommy’s head. “I don’t know how the hell Dad’s done this for so long. I have no idea what I’m doing.”

Tommy was silent for a moment. It was rare to hear Wilbur sound this pained about his role as Crown Prince. Being the future king had always been a duty Wilbur had taken on with grace, never complaining, always studying and following Phil around to learn from him. But right now, Wilbur sounded so *exhausted*.

It took a moment for Tommy to think of something to say.

“Well... you don’t really need to know what you’re doing yet,” Tommy told him.

Wilbur made a questioning sound. “What? Of course I do-”

“No, you’re not the king yet,” Tommy pointed out. “Phil’s still the king. You’re supposed to be learning from him how he’s done this for so long.”

There was a moment of silence from Wilbur, before he was suddenly hugging Tommy tighter, and letting out a deep sigh.

“Shit, yeah, I guess you have a point,” he muttered, bringing up his free hand to card his fingers through Tommy’s hair. Without even meaning to do it, Tommy pressed his head closer to Wilbur’s hand. “Phil keeps saying I’m doing well when I negotiate for him at meetings like today. It’s just hard to believe sometimes because I really always feel like I’m bullshitting everything.”

“I mean, ain’t that just what life is?” Tommy asked, eyes growing heavy at the fingers gently combing through his hair. “You bullshit your way through everything until one day you realize it’s not bullshit anymore.”

“When did you get so wise?” Wilbur asked after a beat of silence, the smile now back in his voice.

“I’ve always been wise. And smart. And just the best guy ever, y’know?” Tommy shrugged.



Wilbur laughed, and Tommy could feel the vibrations rumble in his chest.

“Yeah, Toms. You really are,” Wilbur said quietly.

As the laughter faded, Tommy noticed the rumble from Wilbur’s chest stayed. Having two piglin-hybrids for brothers, Tommy had quickly learned what certain noises or behaviors meant for each of them. Right now, this strange kind of purr that was coming from Wilbur meant he was relaxed, and a lot happier than he had been before. The low noise combined with the warm arms around him, and the fingers still carding through his hair were really starting to make Tommy sleepy now.

They both fell quiet, and Wilbur’s breathing began to slow down. While a part of Tommy knew it wasn’t the best time to nap considering he still had to figure out how the hell he was going to sneak out of the palace tonight, he was *really* relaxed right now. Wilbur was very warm, and this bed was one of the softest things he’d ever laid on. If he even tried to get up right now, Tommy was pretty sure he’d just fall back on the bed because he felt completely boneless.

Just closing his eyes for a few minutes wouldn’t hurt, right?

A few minutes ended up being a few hours. The sun was setting by the time an attendant knocked on the door, the two brothers blinking blearily at each other as the attendant explained they were going to be late to dinner.

Tommy didn’t bother putting his fancy clothes back on for the dinner. It wasn’t anything special, not like the giant feast they’d had the first night of their arrival, so it was okay for him to not be dressed up for it.

Dinner was delicious, as expected. Tommy had forgotten all about his stolen lunch after his talk with Tubbo, and he ended up eating his food so quickly that Eret asked if he was okay. Thankfully, Wilbur saved him from embarrassment by joking about how all teenagers inhaled food like a vacuum, and Tommy was able to laugh it off instead of getting questioned about why he didn’t eat lunch.

Tommy was surprised to see that Schlatt wasn’t at the dinner. According to Dream, he’d claimed that he felt fatigued and asked for his meal in his room. Everyone knew it was because he was hungover, but no one dared to say that aloud. Instead, the dinner was filled with light chatting about pointless things—nothing related to trade or negotiations—and for that Tommy was grateful.

Puffy told a wild story of a battle at sea she had been involved in that ended with hoots of surprised laughter. Dream bickered with his military general, Sapnap, which ended with both of them calling the other ‘stupid’ until George yelled at them to shut up. Dream’s Royal Enchanter, a literal *demon* named Bad, excitedly showed off a trick involving some magic glowing lights in the palm of his hand. Phil ended up telling an embarrassing story about a time when Techno and Wilbur had stolen all the gold jewelry in the palace when they were children, which made both of the piglin twins pointedly stare at their plates while Tommy laughed his ass off. And while all this was going on, Eret and Foolish seemed to be in an intense discussion about... architecture?

It was a good dinner overall. Good food, good conversation, and made a hell of a lot more tolerable by the fact that Schlatt wasn't around to start an argument.

By the time dinner was over, Tommy was pleasantly full and his eyes were drooping once more. But despite how amazing the idea of crawling into bed and passing out sounded, Tommy knew he couldn't do that right now.

Phil, Techno, Wilbur, and Tommy all walked back to their rooms as a group. They had all been given individual rooms near the end of one of the wings, with Phil's room being at the far end, Wilbur's being next to Phil's, followed by Tommy's room, and then Techno's.

There hadn't been much conversation as the family had walked back. Dinner had been loud and exciting, but now the full bellies and day's events seemed to be catching up with everyone. As their footsteps slowed near Techno's room though, Phil spoke up.

"So, uh, before we go to bed, I just wanted to say you all did really well at the meeting today," Phil said, smiling warmly at the three of them.

Tommy snorted. "I left early, not sure that counts as doing well."

"You waited until an appropriate time to leave, and you kept your exit subtle. But you still made an effort to show up, show that you cared about representing the Empire, and that means a lot in itself," Phil told him, resting a hand on his shoulder.

Tommy shrugged, not looking into Phil's eyes. "It really wasn't that big of a deal. I just wanted to see what goes on in those things."

"Tommy, you're a teenager, and you've only been a royal for less than a year. The fact that you have any interest at all in what goes on behind the scenes of these alliances and stuff is pretty damn shocking," Phil told him.

"I mean, why wouldn't I wanna know what's going on? The Empire's my home. Of course I care about what's going on with it."

At this, Phil's smile softened, and he reached up to ruffle Tommy's hair. "You're right. It is your home. I'm just glad to see you settling into your role so well."

Tommy thought back to earlier that day, when he'd stolen from the kitchens for no apparent reason. He thought of his plans for later that evening, how he was going to sneak out of the castle to meet Tubbo. His face flushed with guilt.

Phil didn't notice Tommy's change in demeanor though, and dropped his hand to look to his other two sons.

"Techno, how about we go over what you talked about with Puffy tomorrow during breakfast?" Phil asked.

"Sounds good to me," Techno grunted.

“And Wil, you get some rest, okay? You did a lot of talking today, and you did a great job of it too. But I don’t want you losing your voice or working yourself to the bone or anything, got it?” Phil then said, turning to Wilbur.

“Actually, first I have to finish up drafting those outpost plans and then I can get rest-”

“You can do those tomorrow,” Phil said, cutting him off.

“Tomorrow though I was going to have a meeting with Dream to talk about alternate trade routes with Manberg,” Wilbur protested, frowning at Phil.

Sighing, Phil folded his arms across his chest. “I can handle that, mate. Despite the fact that you lot like to say I’m old as shit, I am still able to perform my duties as king.”

“But I’m the one who started this conversation, I should be the one to-”

“Wilbur, seriously, I want you to sleep. If our meeting is still going on when you wake up, you can join us then. But you’re allowed to sleep in,” Phil said, his kind words contrasting with a tone that left no room for argument.

Wilbur stared Phil down, clearly frustrated at being scolded like a child. Phil met his gaze evenly, barely even lifting his chin despite the drastic height difference between the two of them. During this silent battle, Tommy exchanged a side-eyed glance with Techno, both of them unsure what to do in this situation.

After another beat of silence though, Wilbur sighed and dropped his head. “Fine. I’ll try to get some sleep.”

Another bright smile lit up Phil’s face. “Good. I’ll ask the attendants not to wake you tomorrow morning.”

Wilbur opened his mouth to protest, but one more stern look from Phil made him shrink away.

“Uh, since whatever that was just got settled, I think I’m gonna go to my room now,” Techno said, folding his arms over his chest.

“Oh, yeah, let’s all go get some shut eye then,” Phil agreed. Stepping over, he gave Techno, Tommy, and Wilbur all short hugs, and ruffled Tommy’s hair one more time before moving back. “Night lads!”

The three brothers waved goodbye as their father disappeared into his room. Once Phil had left, Techno patted Tommy on the back and bumped into Wilbur’s shoulder with his own as he also went to retire to his room.

“If you need me I’ll probably be reading,” Techno said, pausing in front of his door. “But don’t need me. I want sleep.”

“No worries about that, Tech,” Tommy snorted.

“And Wilbur, if I find out you’re awake, I’ll totally tell Phil,” Techno then added, glaring at his twin.

Narrowing his eyes, Wilbur glared back. “You really want to play that kind of dangerous game?” He asked, raising an eyebrow in a silent challenge.

There was a beat of silence, as if Techno were weighing the pros and cons of the threat. Then, Techno shrugged. “Fair enough. See ya later.” Guess he decided it wasn’t worth it.

The door clicked shut behind him, leaving only Wilbur and Tommy in the hall.

“You gonna try and threaten me into sleeping now?” Wilbur asked, turning his raised eyebrow to Tommy.

“Not really, considering Phil and Techno both kinda stole my thunder with it anyhow,” Tommy shrugged, jerking his thumb towards Phil’s room. “Plus, I know what a stubborn ass you can be, and I know you’re just gonna be more determined to stay awake to get your work done now, right?”

Wilbur laughed. “I think you’re talking about yourself there, Tommy. You basically exist out of spite.”

“Where do you think you learned it from?” Tommy then challenged back, smirking at Wilbur.

At this, Wilbur balked. “That doesn’t even make sense! I’m older than you!”

“And yet I’m still the master,” Tommy teased.

“Master of being a dumb child maybe,” Wilbur muttered, scowling at Tommy. Tommy opened his mouth to tell Wilbur that he was most definitely not a fucking child, let alone a dumb one, but Wilbur spoke again before he could. “Anyway, I might actually take Phil’s advice for once and get some sleep. I’ve been groggy as hell since that nap earlier today.”

In all honesty, Tommy was too. Even now, the idea of curling up in his bed was almost too strong to resist. But he couldn’t do that. It had to be getting close to the time he said he’d meet Tubbo anyway.

“Me too, I’m probably gonna go straight to bed,” Tommy lied, eyes ducking to the ground.

“Alright then, get some rest,” Wilbur said with a smile, warm hand squeezing Tommy’s shoulder as he turned to his own room.

Waving to his brother, Tommy slipped into his own room, slumping against the door as soon as it shut behind him. Okay. Dinner was done, his family was all asleep, so those two things were taken care of. Now he just had to figure out how the hell he was going to sneak out of the palace without being spotted.

Tommy quickly replaced his current clothes with all black ones, to make it easier to slip between the shadows. He checked the clock, expecting it to be nearly 11, and balked when he realized he still had nearly an hour before his meeting time was up.

Guess that gave him more time to think then.

Pacing around his room, Tommy tried to come up with a plan. The attendant outside his room had already been dismissed for the evening, so he didn't have to worry about being spotted by them. There were guards posted outside the entrance to the guest wing of the palace, so leaving his room through the main hallway in general might not be a good idea.

Secret passageways would've been *so* useful here.

There was a creaking as the wind outside rattled his window, and Tommy paused his pacing. Walking over to the window, he pushed the pane open a crack, looking out over the edge. There was a thick, stone, window ledge on the outside, with just enough room for Tommy to stand on. When he poked his head completely out the window and glanced to the side, he saw the same thick ledges jutting out from every other window all the way towards the courtyard. As long as Tommy was quiet, he could hypothetically crawl along the palace wall to get to the front gate.

From there he still wasn't sure how he'd get over the fence, but he could just cross that bridge when he got to it. After all, the best Tommy plans came into existence on the fly.

If he had to slowly scale the palace walls though and get to the courtyard within the hour, Tommy would have to leave soon. Soon soon. Like, now.

Grabbing a small satchel, Tommy stuffed a few random items in it that he might need during this outing. Dagger, some spare primes, and a spare bread roll that had been left in his room in case he needed a midnight snack. He didn't want to be hungry when he was out and about, now did he?

Lastly, Tommy grabbed a black cloak from the closet, throwing it over his shoulders and pulling up the hood so it shrouded his hair and his face. Then, with everything he needed gathered together, he walked over and pushed the window open as far as it would go.

A cool breeze enveloped him, a stark contrast to the heat earlier that day. Taking a breath to steady himself, Tommy climbed onto the windowsill, and awkwardly clambered out to the window ledge, grabbing onto the lip of the window above.

His cloak billowed behind him, and Tommy's fingers gripped the lip of the upper window edge tight enough to where they turned white. He had experience climbing buildings like this before. In the past, Tommy had been a master of scurrying up impossibly tall towers like a raccoon, and used that to his advantage whenever he could. However, like his pickpocketing skills, his climbing had dulled with the lavish lifestyle of his past year.

That didn't mean he couldn't do it though. He may have been Prince Theseus of the Antarctic Empire, but he was also Theseus "Tommy" Fucking Innit. Out of practice didn't mean useless. If anyone could do this, it was him.

Gritting his teeth, Tommy forced himself to loosen his grip on the upper window ledge. Then, he shuffled towards the edge, eyeing the distance between his window and the next. For a

shorter person it might have been too far to step across. But Tommy was a Big Man, and his height meant he only had to stretch out an extra long step to reach the next window ledge.

So, Tommy reached his right foot out onto the next window ledge, and then did the same with his right hand. Once he was stretched between the two windows, Tommy then clenched his jaw, counted backwards from three, and then forced himself to snap his left hand over as well, followed by his left foot.

It surprised Tommy with how easy it was. He barely even wobbled! This was going to be easier than he thought.

Tommy scaled across several windows with ease, leaving his own room behind as he started to cross the next one. However, when his boot landed on the window ledge in front of Wilbur's room, Tommy noticed the candlelight spilling out from the glass panes and he froze.

Shit, he didn't account for the fact that he had to be crossing in front of windows people actually looked out of. What the hell was he thinking?! If one person glanced over to their window while he was passing by and saw a guy dressed in all black scaling the castle, he'd be thrown in a prison faster than he could pray for more primes.

But then, after freezing in fear, Tommy looked closer at the candlelight. It was barely noticeable, a few streaks of orange on the window ledge here and there. As Tommy leaned as far as he dared to get a better view of the window, he was smacked with the realization that Wilbur had his curtains closed.

Crisis averted. Thank god.

Tommy continued climbing across the window ledges, checking for curtains every time he stepped onto a new ledge. Thankfully, Phil's room was the same way, and Tommy scurried further on.

By the time he escaped the guest wing part of the palace, his fingers were aching and his nose had already gone numb from the icy wind. On the plus side though, the next section of the palace was lower than the guest wing, so Tommy would be able to get off the window ledges and make his way across the roof. On the downside however, the roof was slanted and covered in tiles.

The jump to the roof wasn't actually all that bad. Sure, he slipped a bit and probably broke a few tiles with his landing, but he was able to get some traction on the tiles and stopped himself from sliding off the edge. Once his momentum had slowed, he was able to push to his feet and walk across the slanted roof, stepping with great care to make sure he didn't lose his footing.

Tommy was getting closer to the courtyard. He could hear guards chatting as they patrolled below his feet, and he had to make sure to duck down low so they couldn't spot him. However, from the angle the guards were walking at, it would've been hard to see him even if they did look up at the roof, so Tommy's biggest worry was just getting to the front of the palace.

After a few more minutes of walking, he finally made it to the part of the palace that was closest to the barrier fence that surrounded the palace grounds. He was standing above the kitchens at this point, and there was a part of the roof that came so close to the fence that the jump wasn't even worrisome.

But this was where Tommy's luck started to run out. The top of the barrier fence was covered with flat slabs, built for guards to walk around so they could ensure no one was trying to climb the fence in the night. If Tommy wanted to run on this fence to get to the gate where Tubbo was waiting, he was going to have to ensure the patrolling guards didn't spot him.

Voices blew towards him in the wind, and Tommy pressed himself against the roof tiles as his eyes darted towards the fence. In the faint moonlight, he could make out the figures of two uniformed guards walking across the flat top, chatting to each other with crossbows resting on their shoulders. Hidden in the shadows, Tommy waited for the two to pass by his part of the roof, hardly daring to breathe in case they spotted him.

He didn't know if that was the only patrol they had on top of the fence. The perimeter of the palace was rather large, so he would be surprised if they only had one guard patrol making loops around the flat-topped fence. But he couldn't see a second patrol from his vantage point, so as the two guards passed by, Tommy figured this was as good of a chance as any.

As soon as the guard's voices faded away, Tommy made his move. He leapt off the slanted tile roof of the palace, boots slamming against the stone slabs on top of the fence and stinging his feet. Once he made his landing, he glanced behind him to see if the guard's had noticed, but they were too far away to have heard. So, he quickly pushed to his feet and sprinted towards the gate, hood pulled tightly over his head as he booked it.

The corner of the barrier had a large pillar that jutted above the flat slab top of the fence, and Tommy darted behind it as soon as he reached it. If he made a left and kept walking across the fence, he would get to the gate, where two more guards were currently stationed.

Glancing down to the shadowed ground, Tommy tried to search for Tubbo. He obviously wouldn't be waiting directly in front of the gate where the guards could see him. But Tubbo had said to meet him at the gate, so where else would he be?

His question was answered by a hushed yell coming from directly below him.

"Tommy? Is that you?" Tubbo whisper-shouted.

Looking directly beneath where he was pressed against the pillar, Tommy could see the small form of Tubbo standing right against the fence. There were two other figures with him, although Tommy couldn't make their features out in the shadows.

"Yeah, it's me! How the fuck do I get down from here?" Tommy whisper-yelled back, eyes darting to the guards by the gate to make sure they couldn't hear their conversation.

"You didn't bring a rope?" Tubbo questioned.

Tommy flushed. That probably would've been a good idea.

“I, uh, couldn’t find one!” He lied.

Even in the faint moonlight, Tommy could see Tubbo’s doubtful expression. C’mon, he was rusty, okay?

“It’s alright, I got it,” another male voice chimed in. One of the figures beside Tubbo moved out of the shadows, and Tommy could see it was a guy not too much older than him with a shaved head, the moonlight glinting off his colorful glasses. In his hand, he was holding some kind of rope with a four-pronged metal hook attached to one end. “Oi, you might wanna back up a bit!” The guy then whisper-shouted to him.

Nodding, Tommy stepped back, glancing around once more to make sure another guard patrol wasn’t near. The guy began to swing the hook in a circle, gaining momentum with every loop, before he chucked the hook up at the pillar. The rope looped around the pillar, and now having figured out what this was, Tommy rushed over to wrap the rope into the metal hooks so it was secure.

The bald guy gave Tommy a thumbs up, and he nodded as he grabbed onto the rope and carefully climbed down the side of the pillar. Once his feet landed on firm ground, a hand reached out to pat his back, and he turned around to see Tubbo grinning at him.

“You made it, big man!”

“Of course I did. I told you I’d be here, didn’t I?” Tommy shrugged, smiling back at Tubbo.

Beside them, the bald guy tugged on the grappling hook still wrapped around the pillar, and it clattered to the ground. “We’ll throw that back up there later tonight so you can get back in the palace before sunrise,” the guy explained, folding the rope back over itself and shoving it into a satchel he had on his shoulder. “I’m Jack by the way.”

“Ayup, Jack,” Tommy greeted.

A surprise smile flickered across Jack’s face. “Ayup, mate!”

“Oh, yeah I didn’t introduce you guys,” Tubbo laughed. “Yeah, that’s Jack, and the other guy behind you is Ranboo. We all, uh, work together.”

Up until this point, Tommy had completely forgotten about the third figure he’d seen. Whirling around though, he realized why the guy had slipped his mind. He blended into the shadows scarily well, with half of his entire body looking like the same color as the night sky, while the other half was matching with the white glow of the moon. Along with his peculiar skin tones, Tommy had to crane his neck to meet the guy’s face because this guy was *tall*. It only took a few moments for Tommy to connect the dots and realize the guy was some kind of Enderman hybrid.

“Uh, yeah, I’m Ranboo. Like Tubbo said,” Ranboo said in a soft voice, gesturing vaguely towards Tubbo as he wrapped his arms around himself. He gave Tommy a shy smile but didn’t look into his eyes, and Tommy quickly glanced away when he realized why that might make him uncomfortable.



“Well boys, nice to meet you all. Tubbo probably told you but I’m Tommy,” Tommy introduced, turning back to Tubbo. “So, Tubbo, you gonna tell me why you got me out here now?”

“Like I told you earlier today, I can’t give you details until we know we can trust you. So we’re actually gonna be giving you a few tests,” Tubbo explained, his grin sharpening into a smirk.

“Tests?” Tommy questioned.

“Yup, tests,” Jack affirmed. “To make sure your skill is up to snuff, and to make sure you’re not secretly a snitch for the royals or something.”

Tommy gulped. Thankfully, no one noticed

“Ah, yep, makes sense. Sounds good to me, definitely!” Tommy agreed, probably a bit too loudly. “So, uh, what’s the first test?”

“Follow us and we’ll show you,” Jack said, readjusting his bag as he started to walk away from the palace. Tubbo and Ranboo both started following, and with one last glance at the palace, Tommy hurried behind them, having absolutely no idea what this night would bring.

## Chapter End Notes

finally gettin that family content poggggg

ANYWAY tomorrow's chapter is going to be very action packed so keep an eye out for that, it's a lot of fun. I hope you guys enjoyed this one though, even if it was a little more chill with just some brotherly bonding and a bit of action near the end

please please let me know if you enjoyed down in the comments! they make my day (and make me want to update faster lol)

<3

# three tests

## Chapter Summary

Tommy's skills get tested

## Chapter Notes

hey guys! like I promised, here's the next chapter to make up for the fact that I missed last week

(don't expect this to be a regular thing though, me posting weekly or making up for the absence with double updates, i literally have no real schedule with this so)

anyway, thank you all so much for the kindness you've already showed on the last chapter, I'm super glad you guys are enjoying this as much as I'm enjoying writing it

NOW let's have some fun

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The palace faded into the distance behind them, and Tommy lifted his hood a little higher as he realized this was his first time actually walking around Essempee. While he'd seen a bit of the kingdom itself during the ride over, he hadn't actually gone out himself yet. He and Techno had talked about it a bit, having agreed that if there was a day where Phil and Wilbur were free, they would drag both of them out to go explore. But that day hadn't come yet, so Tommy's first actual tour of the kingdom was instead being led by a group of thieves.

Not that Tommy was complaining, of course.

They made their way onto a small street lined with cobblestone, their boots clacking against the uneven stone in matching rhythms. There were a few people out at this time of night, but it wasn't as bustling as Tommy imagined it was during the day. They passed through a large square that Tommy could only guess served as some kind of market in the day, but was currently only occupied by empty stands and whistling wind.

Tommy hung towards the back as the group walked. Jack was leading the way, while Tubbo and Ranboo were pressed close to one another right behind him. Even though Tubbo was the one to invite him out, Tommy had a feeling Jack held a higher role in whatever organization they were a part of. He wasn't sure what tipped him off to it, maybe it was the quiet confidence that Jack carried with him, or how neither Tubbo or Ranboo questioned the

authority in his voice. However, Tommy also got the sense that Jack wasn't the actual leader of the group as a whole. Maybe he was the second in command, because the leader wouldn't meet Tommy unless he passed the tests.

As far as the tests went, Tommy had no clue what to expect. While he knew there was going to be some way he had to prove his trustworthiness, he hadn't realized his skills were going to be tested as well. He wondered how difficult the tests were going to be. If this was a group of high-level, professional thieves, then Tommy was probably going to get fucked by this because even when he'd been in his prime, he was nowhere near the level of a professional thief.

But Tubbo didn't seem like a full on professional. There was no way he was that much older than Tommy, and Tommy couldn't imagine a high-level, professional thief group letting a teenager into their midst. No, this group had to be a bit lower level, but still well-respected. Maybe a close group of friends? Tubbo and Ranboo certainly seemed close, with the way Tubbo was pressing his side against Ranboo and chatting excitedly with him, his hands dancing in the air as he spoke about something involving explosions. Ranboo wasn't very responsive, but he was nodding at Tubbo, showing he was listening with a soft smile on his face.

Okay, so things he had figured out so far. Jack was most likely the highest ranking member of the three members Tommy was with. It wasn't a professional group, but they clearly had experience under their belts. Tubbo was definitely closer with Ranboo than he was with Jack, but they all seemed to be good friends with one another nonetheless.

So deep in his thoughts, Tommy didn't even notice the group slowing down until he nearly walked straight into Ranboo's back.

"We're here, lads," Jack announced, gesturing to the building in front of them.

Peering around Ranboo's tall form, Tommy could see they were standing in front of a pub. The place was lit up on the inside, the hum of chattering voices slipping out between the cracks in the walls. It was a squat, two story building with a window on the upper level, but there was no light coming from it. Possibly an apartment?

"I didn't think getting plastered was gonna be the way you guys test for trust," Tommy muttered.

"Oi! I'm not letting a bunch of children drink on my watch," Jack exclaimed, even though he couldn't have been more than a few years older than Tommy. "Get your asses in here and I'll explain what you're gonna do." Ignoring his desire to protest at being called a child, Tommy followed Tubbo and Ranboo inside.

The chatter Tommy could hear coming from inside the pub was turned up tenfold as soon as they stepped through the doors. Tables were filled with groups of men and women holding large pints of amber liquor, laughing and yelling to one another from across the pub. The floor was sticky with spilled drinks, and Tommy tried to watch where he stepped so he wouldn't slip as he followed Tubbo to the back of the pub.

In the far back corner, there was an unoccupied table. Tubbo slid into a seat first, with Ranboo squeezing in beside him. Jack and Tommy both sat across from the two, and Tommy pushed his hood off his head so he didn't stand out too much.

"Alright, so what are we here for?" Tommy asked, still keeping his head low despite the fact that no one outside the palace would be able to recognize him.

"You wanna get right to it, eh? Alright then," Jack grinned, patting Tommy's shoulder.

"Okay, so here's the gist. You see that bartender over there?"

Tommy looked over to the bar, where he saw an older man with white hair wiping down glasses.

"Yeah?"

"That's the owner of the bar. His name is Earl, and he didn't pay us for a recent job we did for him," Jack explained. Tommy nodded, feeling a pit form in his gut. "There's a set of stairs behind us. If you go up them, you'll get to Earl's office. You gotta get into his office, find the twenty primes he owes us, and bring it back to the table without getting caught."

Shit. Okay. Not as bad as Tommy thought it would be, but still a bit higher level than the stuff he used to do. He never broke into rooms and stole from them. He mostly would just pickpocket people, or if he happened across an unattended purse he would take what he needed.

Still, Tommy had got himself this far. No way was he going to turn back now when this wasn't even that impossible of a task.

"Alright, I can do that," Tommy said, shifting out of his chair and to his feet.

Jack stood up when he did. "I'll come with you to watch the door," he explained.

Huh. Tommy thought he would have to do this completely on his own, but at least Jack would watch the door for him to warn him if Earl was on his way up.

Nodding, Tommy glanced towards the bar, where Earl was pouring beers for two women. He was busy chatting with both of them as he handed the first woman her glass, and Tommy figured now was as good of a time as any.

When it came to getting into an area you weren't supposed to be in, the goal wasn't to get there as quickly as possible. Instead, the goal was to get there without being noticed. If Tommy rushed over to the stairs, he knew full well it would draw attention, and he'd be spotted. But if he instead casually strolled over there like nothing was amiss, no one was going to even look in his direction.

And sure enough, that's what happened. Tommy walked over to the stairs at a leisurely pace with Jack following close behind, and went up the steps like he knew exactly where he was going. None of the other patrons in the bar, or Earl for that matter, looked his way.

The chatter from the pub became quiet when they got to the top of the stairs, where there was only a single door in front of a small landing. The door was shut, and when Tommy tried the handle, it didn't budge.

"You know how to lockpick, right?" Jack asked, shoving his hands in his pockets as he leaned against the wall opposite the door.

"Of course I do," Tommy scoffed. Technically, that was true. He did know how to pick locks, and he had done so multiple times before. However, he'd always been *shit* at it. Lockpicking relied on patience and quiet, so you could feel the gears move in order to get the lock to click open. Tommy had always been lacking in both the patient and quiet department, and usually his attempts at lockpicking ended up with him getting so frustrated he would accidentally jam the lock trying to force it open.

However, he hadn't tried to pick a lock in a while. He was older now, more patient. In all ways he was an improved (and bigger) man. This should be a piece of cake.

Hopefully.

Kneeling down, Tommy reached into his satchel and pulled out a small hairpin that he knew should do the trick just fine. Behind him, Jack made a noise of surprise.

"You came prepared," he commented.

"Pfft, yeah, I'm not an amateur," Tommy shot back.

Jack didn't need to know that Tommy hadn't brought the pin because he thought he might have to pick a lock. Instead, the pin had just happened to be in his bag, because he usually had hair pins like that lying around his room. During really formal events, like banquets or balls, Tommy, Wilbur, and Techno all had to wear crowns to signify their statuses as princes (although Techno wore his nearly 24/7 just because he liked the look.) The thing about a crown though was that it was not an easy thing to keep on your head, especially with someone like Tommy who didn't like to keep still. So, he used hairpins to help keep it in place.

He was glad one happened to be in his bag. Made him look a hell of a lot more professional to Jack.

Straightening out the pin, Tommy shoved it into the lock and started fiddling with it. He could feel the gears inside the lock, and tried to shift them around as best he could with the small wire pin. A few moved at his first attempt, but the other tumblers stayed in place.

A minute passed of Tommy just randomly moving the pin in the lock, trying to get it to shift the tumblers in the right way. Every time one came close to coming undone, another would seem to fall back down into its locked position.

Tommy was getting frustrated. He had the urge to just jam the hairpin inside the lock as far as it would go and see if that would do the trick, but Tommy knew from experience that it

wouldn't. Jack's gaze bored into the back of his head, and Tommy understood that this was the first test. If he couldn't get this door open, he might as well leave the pub right now.

Closing his eyes, Tommy took a deep breath to steady himself as he took the pin out of the lock. Patience and calm. Phil always told him those were the best tools he could use to solve a problem.

So Tommy leaned closer to the door, and tried again. This time, he moved the pin slowly, pressing his ear near the lock so he could try to hear the tumblers moving.

*Click!*

The door swung open, and a huge grin broke across Tommy's face. He did it! He actually did it!

He looked to Jack to see his reaction, and his shoulders sagged when Jack only gave a single nod.

"I wouldn't wait out here too long. Earl could come up to check his office any second now," Jack told him.

Oh, yeah. That was a good point. Tommy needed to be quick about this.

Jumping to his feet, Tommy made his way into the office while Jack stayed outside, flicking the light switch on as he stepped through. The office itself wasn't anything special. There was a thick, green carpet over the wood floors, and a large wooden desk in the center of the room. A plain wooden chair sat behind the desk without even a cushion to make it more pleasant to sit on. There were hardly any decorations in the room, only an old photograph of the outside of the pub.

Not surprising. This place didn't seem like the kind of establishment that would leave the owner rolling in money.

A surge of guilt suddenly swept through Tommy. He was stealing from an old man who ran a tiny pub! What if Earl needed those twenty primes? What if the pub was going through hard times, and that was why he hadn't been able to pay back Tubbo's group?

Glancing back to the door, Tommy was met with a cool gaze behind a pair of red and blue glasses. Jack was observing his every movement, grading him silently on his performance. What would he do if Tommy backed out now? He could just laugh Tommy off and tell him to get out of his face. That would be the best case scenario. But he could also yell, cause a scene, tell Earl that someone was up in his office. Tommy had already picked the lock. He had already broken into this place, so he was culpable for that at the very least. But that had to be against some kind of thief honor code, right? You don't snitch?

Tommy wasn't sure. While he felt guilty about possibly stealing from an old man, he wasn't in the best position to protest now. Maybe he could steal the twenty primes to give to Jack, but then take out twenty primes from his bag to leave for Earl at the bar without letting the others see. That would make up for it, right?

That was the best Tommy could do for now. Sighing, he moved over to the desk and opened one of the drawers to rifle through in search of the primes.

The first drawer had a few papers crumbled inside of it, but no primes. The second drawer adjacent to it had some pens, more paperwork, and a calculator. Still, no primes. The third drawer had a large, ornate dagger resting inside of it, and Tommy's eyes widened as he slowly shut the drawer without touching it.

The last drawer, the one closest to the bottom, was Tommy's last option. When he went to open it, the drawer wouldn't budge, and he spotted another lock embedded into it. So Tommy used his hairpin to pick the lock again, which thankfully didn't take as long as before.

When the drawer opened though, it was empty. Frowning, Tommy knelt down closer to it, reaching a hand in the drawer to see if there was something hidden in the back. But that resulted in nothing, because the drawer was empty.

Except...

Tommy touched the bottom of the drawer again, noticing a hollow thump when his fingers bumped into it. Curling his fingers into a fist, Tommy knocked on the bottom of the drawer, and the hollow echo was much more noticeable.

Grabbing out his own dagger, Tommy carefully jammed it into the edge of the drawer, using it to lift the fake bottom out. The fake bottom popped out easily, and after Tommy rested it next to the desk, he saw what was underneath.

Primes. Small coin bags bulging with primes. There had to be at least twenty shoved into the tiny drawer, and when Tommy opened one up, he counted twenty primes in just the one bag alone.

Okay. Tommy no longer felt bad about stealing from this old man. He clearly could afford it.

Right as Tommy shoved one of the coin bags in his satchel, he heard the door to the office slam shut. Leaping to his feet, Tommy looked to see if someone had stormed inside the office, but he was still alone. Instead, he could hear muffled voices right outside the door.

"Jack? What the hell are you doing up here?" A gruff man's voice asked.

"Hey Earl! Long time no see, bud!" Jack replied, the strain obvious in his tone. "I was just, uh, hoping to talk to you."

"Don't tell me you're here to yammer my ear off about your stupid payment again."

"Yeah, that's exactly why I'm here. We got you what you wanted, and you didn't pay us for the job," Jack said, his own tone shifting to anger.

"Because the damn thing was a fake!" Earl suddenly shouted, making Tommy jump. "I can't make a single prime off that piece of shit."

“That’s not our fault it’s fake! You’re the one who told us where the painting was, and we simply did as you said. We aren’t art dealers, we just grab the shit we’re told to.”

“I ain’t payin’ you for a fake fucking painting,” Earl then growled.

The doorknob rattled and Tommy froze, when Jack’s voice suddenly spoke up again.

“Aw c’mon, mate! Surely we can work something out!” The strain was back in his voice, and Tommy realized what Jack was doing. He was trying to stall for Tommy.

Shit. Shit shit shit. This was bad. This was really bad. Earl was going to come inside any second now and see a thief standing in front of his desk with his secret cash stash exposed to the world.

He had to move fast.

Dropping to his knees, Tommy stopped listening to the conversation outside the door as he shoved the fake bottom back on top of the drawer. Then, he slammed the drawer shut, and leapt to his feet to try and figure out what to do.

Hiding was out. There was no back to the desk so he would be completely visible if he tried to hide under it. There were no closets or corners he could shove himself into either. If the ceiling had rafters Tommy could have climbed up there, but it was just a flat ceiling with nothing to grab onto. So his only other option was to escape.

There were only two ways into this office. The door Earl and Jack were still talking in front of, or the window Tommy had seen from outside the building.

Guess he only had one choice.

Launching himself across the room, Tommy flicked the light switch back off, plunging the room into darkness. Then, he ran towards the window and swung it open as far as it would go. He could hear Earl’s hand on the doorknob again, and didn’t bother trying to be careful as he pulled himself above the window and onto the roof. Right as he pushed the window shut, he heard the door to the office open.

Crouched on the edge of the roof, Tommy watched the lights in the office flick on. He was panting, heart pounding in his ears from both exertion and fear. While he could wait on the roof for Earl to leave, he also had a feeling that wasn’t the best idea, considering Earl could check his money stash and notice he was missing a coin bag.

So instead, Tommy scurried over the roof to the back of the pub. In the alley behind the building, there was a stack of boxes from what Tommy guessed was a recent delivery. Figuring the boxes would work for his purposes, Tommy grabbed onto the roof ledge and carefully lowered himself until he was dangling over the boxes. Then, he closed his eyes and dropped down.

His boots slammed against one of the wooden crates at the top of the box pile, and he breathed a sigh of relief. From there, it was easy to drop down into the alley, and walk around



back to the front of the pub.

When he walked inside a second time, he noticed the bar was unattended while the patrons still chatted amicably at their tables. In the far back corner, Tubbo and Ranboo were talking to one another, while Jack was nowhere to be seen.

Tubbo and Ranboo both looked up as Tommy approached, their eyes widening in unison.

“Did you get the stuff?” Tubbo asked with a wide grin.

“Is everything okay? Where’s Jack?” Ranboo followed up.

“He must still be up there talking to Earl if he’s not with you all,” Tommy said, glancing towards the stairs as he sat back down across from the two of them. “And yes, I did get the stuff,” he added, smirking at the two boys.

Tubbo gasped in delight. “Let me see-”

Footsteps on the stairs cut Tubbo off, and they all looked over to see Jack trudging down with slumped shoulders. As soon as he spotted Tommy though, his eyes widened.

“What the- but how did you get- if you were up there how-”

“I climbed out the window,” Tommy explained, unable to keep his smirk from widening at the sight of Jack’s shock. “Then I went to the back, hopped off the roof, and walked right back through the front doors again.”

Blinking rapidly, Jack slid in next to Tommy. “I swear to god, you almost gave me a heart attack. When Earl opened the door I was convinced it was over for you, but you were just gone!” Jack laughed to himself, shaking his head before looking back up. “Did you end up finding the primes though?”

“Sure did, twenty primes as promised,” Tommy declared, reaching into his satchel and pulling out the coin bag. He dropped it into the center of the table, and Tubbo’s hand immediately darted out to snatch it. He opened the bag, counting the coins as Ranboo peeked over his shoulder, and after a few moments, Tubbo cheered.

“It’s all here! I knew I had a good feeling about you,” Tubbo said, beaming at him.

“Wow, I’m impressed,” Ranboo added, giving Tommy a shy smile.

Something warm rose up in Tommy’s chest at the praise, and his smirk softened to a more genuine smile.

“So, uh, is that it? Have I proven myself?” He asked, glancing between Tubbo, Ranboo, and Jack.

At this, Jack laughed.

“Don’t get me wrong, that was impressive. But you’re gonna have to do more than just one tiny little swipe job to get us to trust you,” Jack said, leaning back in his seat. “We got two more stops tonight. If you do well, then we can bring you to the others.”

While a part of Tommy was disappointed that he hadn’t earned their trust yet, he wasn’t particularly surprised. Of course they were going to have more than one job for him to prove himself. Besides, this one hadn’t even taken very long. Hopefully the other two would be just as fast.

They left the pub before Earl came back down from his office to avoid any possible fallout of him realizing he’d been robbed. From there, the next two jobs were actually rather simple.

For the next job, Jack led the group to a brothel, although he didn’t let them inside. Instead, he instructed Tommy to find a rich person leaving the brothel (considering it was late in the evening, this wasn’t an uncommon sight), and pickpocket them for something valuable.

Now this was Tommy’s field of expertise. Only a few minutes after being given his task, Tommy spotted an older man in expensive looking clothes stumbling out of the brothel, clearly wasted from an evening spent with the women inside. It was almost too easy for Tommy to walk over, ‘accidentally’ bump into the guy to send him falling to the ground, and pull his wedding ring out of his pocket after helping him back to his feet and apologizing profusely.

The ring itself was more impressive than Tommy expected it to be. It was a small gold band with precious gems embedded into it, and even though he wasn’t an expert in gemstones, Tommy could tell they were all real.

Tubbo, Jack, and Ranboo were thrilled with Tommy’s prize, and after another round of praise from the trio, they headed onto the final task.

For this third job, Tubbo took the lead, bringing them through the twists and turns of several alleyways until they were walking parallel to the forest. The streetlights grew darker as they moved into a quieter part of the city, and it wasn’t long before they reached an abandoned building that was practically falling apart at the seams.

Tommy would’ve been lying if he said he wasn’t sketched out by the house. It looked like the kind of place you would definitely get murdered in, with rotting wood and weeds sprouting up in the floor. But Tubbo, Ranboo, and Jack didn’t seem phased as they all walked through the house and towards a set of stairs that led down under the house.

A part of Tommy wanted to run, but he’d gone this far. He wasn’t going to turn back now.

In the stone cellar underneath the house, Tommy spotted a teenage boy around their age waiting by a heavy metal door. He nodded at Tubbo, Ranboo, and Jack, but raised an eyebrow when his gaze fell on Tommy.

“He with you?” The boy asked.

“Yup, sure is,” Tubbo replied.

Nodding, the boy unlatched the metal door and swung it open. As soon as it did, a wave of noise poured out, and Tommy frowned as he followed the group in.

Whatever Tommy had been expecting to be underneath an abandoned building, it wasn't this.

It was a casino. A massive, underground casino. Poker tables were scattered around the casino floor, with well-dressed people laughing and chatting as they gambled their primes away. The air was heavy with the smell of cigarette smoke and perfume, and warm yellow lighting reflected off the walls in crystalline patterns from the glimmering chandelier above it all.

"Uh, why did you bring me to a casino?" Tommy asked, his nerves from earlier flooding back full force.

"This is your final test," Jack explained, slinging an arm around his shoulders. "The task is simple. Just steal some poker chips off one of the tables without anyone noticing. Bring the chips back to us, and you're done."

"How many do you need?"

"No specific amount. At least two, but you're welcome to swipe more."

Tommy didn't like this. It was one thing to steal from a pub owner, because at least Tommy knew what the result would be if he got caught. Guards would get called, Tommy would get thrown in a prison cell, and then Wilbur would lecture him for five hours straight about the responsibilities of being a prince.

This was different though. This casino was clearly not a legal operation, given how hard it was to even get to this place. There were no guards going to be called on Tommy if he got caught. No, the owner would deal with Tommy in their own way.

It was fine. He could do it. It was just another sleight of hand, which he knew how to do. No different than the other things he'd done that night.

Nodding at the trio, Tommy pushed the hood off his cloak again, and straightened up so he was standing without slouching. He definitely wasn't dressed for a place like this, but if he had the right air about him, he could slip between the other gamblers undetected. After a year of living in a royal palace, Tommy knew exactly how to look like he belonged in this type of crowd.

Walking down the grand staircase, Tommy started to weave through the casino floor, eyes darting over the different tables to try and pick out an easy target. There were plenty of drunk rich people who were leaving their chips ridiculously unguarded, but Tommy's concern wasn't the gamblers noticing what he was doing. Instead, his concern was focused on the dealers. They were the ones who would be more likely to notice if he tried to swipe some chips, so he had to find a dealer who looked easily distracted.

As he passed by this one table, a man's voice called out.

“Hey kid, aren’t you a little young to be here?”

Turning to the table, Tommy saw the dealer eyeing him suspiciously. Ignoring his instinct to shrink down and hide his face, instead Tommy met his gaze evenly.

“What’s my age matter when I’ve got money to spend?” Tommy challenged, trying to put on his most obnoxious ‘rich prince’ voice.

The dealer narrowed his eyes. “I doubt you have the kind of money that these people are playing with.”

Glancing at the table, Tommy saw piles of chips scattered across the colorful surface. He wasn’t sure how much each chip was worth, but he could already tell that even though he brought some primes with him, he definitely didn’t have enough to join this game.

Still, he couldn’t back down now. Then the dealer would know something was up.

“Let me join the game and we’ll find out,” Tommy snarked.

The dealer opened his mouth to respond, when a well-dressed woman sitting at the table whirled around to scowl at him.

“Sorry, our table is full,” she said, before shooting the dealer a dirty look.

The dealer nodded at the woman, and sighed before looking back to Tommy. “You heard the lady. The table is full. Go find someone else’s game to join.”

Oh thank *god*. Nodding at the dealer, Tommy rushed off, glad that the woman hadn’t wanted some random kid to join her game.

Tommy wandered around the tables, trying to find one of the less occupied ones. Near the back corner of the casino floor, there was a table with only two other people playing, and a dealer struggling to deal the cards.

“Oh whoops! Sorry guys, these cards are a little sticky!” The dealer chuckled in an obnoxiously loud voice.

The two men at the table barely looked conscious as the dealer awkwardly joked with them. Both men had empty glasses in front of them, and Tommy was pretty sure one of them was completely passed out. However, Tommy’s focus was less on the gamblers, and more on the dealer.

At first glance, the dealer seemed to just be a normal guy. But the longer Tommy looked at him, the more his skin looked... liquid-y? With every facial movement, a small ripple was cast over his skin, like a cube of jello jiggling on a plate. As Tommy got closer, he could see that the cards were actually sticking to the dealer’s fingers, and when he finally managed to toss one in front of one of the gamblers, Tommy noticed it was covered in some kind of goo.

“Oh hey there, young sir! Do you wanna join the game?” The dealer asked, giving Tommy a wide grin.

Okay, this dealer was definitely not as perceptive as the others, Tommy could tell that already.

“Uh, I think I might just watch for now if that’s alright, see what the energy is,” Tommy replied, taking a seat next to the passed out guy.

“Fine by me!” The dealer replied, still beaming at Tommy as he struggled to get another card off his hand.

The other gambler at the table who was still awake eyed Tommy as he sat down, but didn’t say anything. Instead, he just reached over to pick up one of the cards the dealer had chucked his way, and grimaced at the goo on top of it.

“The fuck is this goop you got on the cards?” The guy grumbled, wiping his hand on his pants.

“Goop? I don’t know what you’re talking about!” The dealer replied, still smiling just as bright.

“I’m talking about this shit!” The guy then said, holding up the card in question. “It’s like slime or something, and it’s disgusting to touch.”

Suddenly, the dealer’s smile turned nervous. “Uh, slime? That’s weird, I don’t know anything about slime, haha! Why would I know anything about slime anyway? I have so many bones! No need for slime at all!”

The guy, much more awake now, straightened up and leaned over the table so he was eye to eye with the dealer. “You tell me right now what the fuck you are-”

As this confrontation was going on, Tommy had a lightbulb moment and realized that this was his chance. The other gambler hadn’t moved at all, and Tommy could hear quiet snoring coming from where his head was buried in his arms. So in one smooth motion, Tommy reached out to grab three chips off the table while the awake gambler was trying to poke the dealer’s face.

“Look man, I don’t care what you are, I don’t have a problem with a goat or a fox or whatever the hell dealin’ me my cards. I just don’t want them covered in slime!” The guy was yelling now, while the dealer had started to back up.

The dealer didn’t seem afraid of the man, but more so seemed confused by what to say.

“Would a ‘dap me up’ help solve this?” The dealer offered, holding up a fist.

The guy blinked at the dealer for a moment, before sighing and shaking his head. “This ain’t worth it. We’re gonna cash out,” he said, leaning back into his seat and reaching over to grab his friend’s shoulder.

As the other guy began to stir, Tommy took that as his cue to leave. He waved to the strange dealer, who eagerly waved back as Tommy beelined away from the casino table. He hurried back across the floor, the chips rattling in his pocket with every step.

Somehow, Tommy made it back to the top of the staircase where Tubbo, Ranboo, and Jack were waiting without further issue. The three of them all seemed surprised when Tommy walked back over to them, and Jack frowned.

“Did you do it?” He asked.

Glancing around to make sure no guards were watching, Tommy reached into his pocket and barely showed the corner of one of the chips so Jack could see it. “Yup, sure did.”

Jack’s eyes widened, as did Tubbo and Ranboo’s. They all shared looks with one another, and Tommy shifted from foot to foot as they seemed to have a silent conversation. Then, after a few moments, Jack nodded.

“Congrats, you passed,” he said, patting Tommy’s shoulder. “Now follow us.”

Tommy barely had time to grin before the trio was walking again. He expected them to head back towards the metal door they entered in so they could leave the casino, but to Tommy’s surprise they all instead made a sharp turn before the door, and led Tommy down a narrow hall he hadn’t noticed before.

The sounds of the casino faded behind them, and Tommy wondered where the hell the trio was taking him. Did they know the casino owner? Had this been some kind of trap to get him indebted to the casino owner for stealing from them? If that was the case, well, Tommy was definitely a little fucked.

He really didn’t want to believe they were tricking him though. Tubbo, Jack, and Ranboo all seemed like genuinely nice people. They didn’t seem like the double-crossing type, and Tommy didn’t want to think of them like that.

Maybe he was jumping to conclusions. For now, he just had to go with what they told him.

They reached a door at the end of the hall. Jack reached up to knock three times, and then stepped back.

The door clicked as it unlocked, and swung open to reveal a man with a gnarly scar on his face, and a beanie on his head.

“Quackity, we found our boy,” Jack said, grinning at him.

Quackity’s eyes darted between the trio, before settling on Tommy behind them. Then, he nodded and opened the door wider, allowing them all entry.

This looked like some kind of back office, with a large poker table in the center. There were two other people in the room—one, a literal fox who didn’t even look like a hybrid, he just looked like a fox that was the size of a person and could stand on two legs—and a woman with bright pink hair, who was sitting in a chair near the poker table.

“Is this him?” The woman asked as Quackity shut the door behind Tommy.

“Yup, this is him. Tubbo was right, he’s a fit for us,” Jack declared, beaming at the woman.

From behind, Quackity made a questioning noise. “So what, you guys just grabbed the first servant in the palace you saw? How do you know he’s even good?”

“We’ve been testing him all night,” Ranboo suddenly chimed in. “He’s actually really good.”

“How did you test him?” The fox then asked, narrowing his eyes at Tommy.

“First, we had him go to Earl’s and get back the twenty primes the bastard owes us,” Jack said, reaching into his pocket to pull out the coin bag Tommy had swiped, and dropped it on the poker table. “Next, we had him show off his pickpocket skills, and he got this ring from a drunkard.” Jack then pulled out the ring, and Quackity’s eyes widened as the gemstones glimmered in the light. “And lastly, Tommy, show them what you just grabbed.”

All the eyes in the room suddenly turned to him, and Tommy shrunk under their combined gazes. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out the three chips he’d grabbed, and dropped them on the poker table.

Quackity let out a sharp gasp. “What the fuck?! Those are my chips!”

Tommy felt the blood drain out of his face at those words, realizing that Quackity must have been the owner of the casino.

“Damn, you got three? I didn’t even think you’d get one!” Tubbo exclaimed, beaming at Tommy.

Suddenly, Quackity was in front of Tommy, and looked to be about two seconds from grabbing him by the shirt. “Which dealer’s table did you steal these from, huh? Which of my dealer’s was slacking off?”

“Um, I’m not sure what his name was, but he was a kind of awkward guy who smiled a lot and might have been made out of slime?” Tommy told him, unsure of how else to explain that dealer.

Quackity blinked a few times, before sighing and stepping back from Tommy. “Of course it was fucking Charlie, why am I even surprised?” He shook his head, before glancing back to the table. “Okay, I’ll give you credit where credit’s due. Good job on swiping these, kid.”

It felt weird getting praised by the casino owner for stealing his poker chips, but Tommy shrugged as a way to accept the praise anyway.

“So, uh, does this mean I passed all the tests and you can tell me what the hell I’m here for now?” Tommy asked, glancing around the room.

There was a beat of silence, and it took Tommy a moment to notice everyone else in the room was looking at the pink-haired woman for a response.

Now Tommy knew who the leader was.

“I don’t trust him yet,” the woman said after a moment in a voice that was soft, yet unwavering.

Tubbo groaned. “C’mon, Niki! He’s perfect! He can steal, he’s stealthy, hell, he even climbed a roof to get away from Earl! And he works in the palace, which is exactly the type of person we need!”

“I understand that, but you haven’t even known him a full day,” the woman—Niki—replied. “For all we know, he could be a spy for the palace, just waiting for us to reveal our plans so the guards can come arrest us.”

“Uh, Niki, while I totally agree with you there, we also don’t have a ton of time,” the fox then pointed out. “We gotta have an answer for the contractor in a few days, and after that we only have limited time till the ball. We need to start planning this as soon as we can.”

Tommy’s brain caught on the word ‘ball.’ That had to be referring to the sendoff ball that was happening at the end of the Dandelion Festival. What the hell was this group planning that had to happen before the ball?

“I know, Fundy,” Niki muttered, pushing her hair back from her face. She was silent for another moment, before turning to look at Tommy directly. “Can you come back here tomorrow? We need to ask you some questions.”

“Um, I think so, yeah,” Tommy replied, even though he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to get away a second night in a row.

“Okay then. Tubbo will meet you wherever you guys met tonight, same time tomorrow. He’ll bring you back here and we’ll have a talk.”

Tommy nodded. He had no idea what kind of questions she was going to throw at him, but now that he knew the sendoff ball was involved, Tommy *had* to find out what this group was planning. Because he was likely going to be involved either way, it was just a matter of if he was going to be involved as Tommy Innit, or Prince Theseus.

The meeting ended shortly after that. Tubbo and Ranboo ended up being the ones to walk him back to the palace, and Tubbo used the grappling hook to help him climb back up the fence. The journey back to his room was a bit more difficult than escaping had been, but Tommy managed well enough, and soon he was back in his bed with a tired body and a busy mind.

Tonight had only made him even more curious to find out what was going on with Tubbo’s group. And hopefully after tomorrow, Niki would be able to trust him so he could find out.

## Chapter End Notes

fun fact I literally had no plans to include charlie in this fic until I was writing this last night and was like "y'know what would be really funny" so there's our favorite slime boy. I have no clue if he's gonna show up again but y'know he's trying his hardest to be a good dealer



anyway I hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! not sure when the next one will be up but I'll aim for next sunday. make sure to subscribe and keep an eye out for the updates! please let me know what you thought in the comments below, they really make my day :)

btw, my tumblr is @bonesandthebees so feel free to follow me there and hmu in dms or whatever, I love chatting with people

<3

# an interrogation

## Chapter Summary

The group needs to decide if they can trust Tommy or not.

## Chapter Notes

sup sup my peeps thank you so much for the love on the last chapter, I'm so glad you guys are enjoying this! sorry this update is a bit later at night than usual, I just got around to finishing the chapter after having to deal with the hell of finals week

but hey! i'm free now! at least until my summer classes start :( gotta love being in college

hope yall enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“So what do you think of him?”

The clanging of a hammer on an anvil echoed through the shop, playing like background music for Ranboo and Tubbo’s current conversation as they sat inside Tubbo’s room.

It was the day after they had given Tommy the tests. That evening, they were going to bring Tommy back to Quackity’s office so Niki could give him whatever questioning she had prepared, and then they would decide if he could officially join the heist.

Ranboo had no idea what questions Niki was preparing. She had been quiet that night when they’d gotten back home, and was pensive when Ranboo asked her what she thought of Tommy. This morning she’d had an early shift at the bakery, so he wasn’t able to talk anymore with her about it.

Now Ranboo was at Hannah’s blacksmith shop, talking to Tubbo while he was on his break.

“What do I think of Tommy?” Ranboo repeated back to Tubbo. Tubbo nodded, and Ranboo paused to try and collect his thoughts.

Tommy was... interesting. He was loud and confident, much more willing to jump into the fray of thievery than Ranboo was when he first started out. Ranboo was still impressed by how he had climbed the roof of Earl’s pub to get away, and how he had then strolled back

through the front door of the pub as if nothing had happened. Tommy clearly had the skills they needed, but they still really had no idea who he was or what his motives were.

“I want to trust him,” Ranboo admitted, folding his hands in front of him on the table. “He’s exactly the type of person we need for this job, but I know we also just met him so we have to be wary.”

“Personally speaking,” Tubbo began, stretching out so his feet landed in Ranboo’s lap, “I think he’s great and that you guys are just being overly paranoid. I mean, he’s a servant! Why the hell wouldn’t he wanna make some extra primes?”

“I mean, yeah of course the money is the main motivator. But maybe the palace has spies specifically set up for things like this. People who can infiltrate groups wanting to rob the palace and then tell on them to get an even bigger bonus,” Ranboo pointed out.

“You really think they’d give him a bigger bonus than what we would give him?” Tubbo asked, frowning at Ranboo.

“That’s true. We are getting paid a ridiculous amount,” Ranboo agreed, gaze flitting around the room.

Tubbo’s room was smaller than the one Ranboo and Niki shared, but it wasn’t unbearably cramped. There was a bed that the two of them were currently sitting on, and a small table with a chair in the far corner. Along with that, the entire room was decorated with roses, with the potted red flowers dotted all around the room and sitting on every free surface. Hannah’s entire shop was like that, decorated with roses, and it seemed that even Tubbo’s room couldn’t escape that fate. Tubbo didn’t seem to mind the decor however, and Ranboo thought it added a nice pop of color to the otherwise plain room.

“I’ll be honest though,” Tubbo said after a moment, lifting his feet out of Ranboo’s lap and straightening back up to a normal sitting position, “I feel like there’s something Tommy’s not telling us.”

Ranboo let out a sigh of relief. “Okay, so it wasn’t just me then. Good to know.”

“Yeah, it’s not just you. I can tell he’s holding something back, but I don’t feel like it’s necessarily a bad thing,” Tubbo explained, shrugging his shoulders. “Like, I genuinely don’t think he would turn us in. Maybe I’m being a bit too optimistic, but I just have a gut feeling we can trust him with that.”

“But you also can tell he’s keeping something from us,” Ranboo pointed out.

“Yes, but we’re also keeping a lot from him, y’know? He willingly came along to participate in our tests and stole a lot of stuff for us, just on the promise that we *might* trust him enough to tell him what’s going on. We gotta give him credit for that,” Tubbo countered.

That was a fair point. Tommy had put a lot of faith into them, doing so much for them while being given hardly any concrete information. But in a way, that almost made Ranboo more suspicious of him. Why was he so desperate to gain their trust?

“Would most people do that though? Go through so much to gain our trust with so little information?” Ranboo asked, frowning at Tubbo.

“I mean, if they want money badly enough I think they would,” Tubbo said, shrugging again. “But I don’t know if that’s what Tommy’s motivation is. While I’m sure being a servant doesn’t pay great, I think you’d still be comfortable enough to not need to pull off stuff like we do.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s probably gonna be part of what Niki asks him tonight,” Ranboo said, leaning into Tubbo’s side. “I don’t know who else we’d go to for this kind of thing though if it’s not Tommy. I mean, we’d basically just have to repeat the whole process of finding a servant, running them through tests, and seeing if we can trust them.”

“That would be kinda annoying. I guess we just have to hope that Niki approves him tonight.” After a beat, Tubbo then grinned as an idea popped into his head. “Say, do you think he knows the royalty?”

“Uh, what do you mean?”

“I mean, he works in the palace right? So he’s probably met all the different royals that are staying there right now. How cool is that?!”

“I guess that’s cool? I dunno much about the royals besides King Dream and his court,” Ranboo admitted. While he knew about his own kingdom’s royalty, it wasn’t like he ever expected to have to know the details about the other kingdoms they were close with.

Of course, Ranboo knew the basic stuff. The Antarctic Empire was the closest ally of the Essempee, located directly to the north of their own kingdom. The capital was buried in a valley deep within the mountains, with many more territories crawling further into the tundra until they hit the ocean. Angia had been allied with Essempee for nearly as long as the Empire had, and was located to the west of their own kingdom. It had a much more temperate climate, with a large emphasis on agriculture. Apparently it was also known for having rather impressive builds. And of course, there was Manberg. Known formerly as L’manberg, the nation was barely even a decade old at this point, having sprung up when a group of independent territories unified under a single government.

When it came to knowing things about the actual royals though, that was where Ranboo fell off the track. He knew the Antarctic Empire was ruled by King Philza, and that he had sons (though he didn’t know how many). Angia was led by the monarch Eret, who had only been crowned a few years before. And then Emperor Schlatt of Manberg, who Ranboo really didn’t know enough about to give a proper opinion on (outside of pointing out that winning a democratic election only to call yourself an emperor was a bit worrying).

“Wait, you’re telling me you don’t know about The Angel of Death or The Blood God?” Tubbo asked, his eyes widening.

“Um... no?” Ranboo had absolutely zero clue what Tubbo was referring to, and judging by those titles, he wasn’t sure he wanted to know.

Tubbo's eyes lit up. "Holy shit, dude! I can't believe you don't know! The Angel of Death is another name given to King Philza, because on the battlefield soldiers say he looks like an Angel of Death swooping down with his giant dark wings to kill anyone who gets in his way."

Up until now, Ranboo didn't even know that Philza had wings, but he decided not to mention this to Tubbo.

"There's also a rumor that King Philza has ties to the Goddess of Death, which I don't know if I fully believe, but I also wouldn't be surprised if it was true," Tubbo added casually, ignoring the way Ranboo's eyes nearly bugged out of his head at that. "And The Blood God refers to his son, Technoblade, who is also the General of the Empire's military. He's one of the most vicious warriors ever seen, apparently able to wipe out entire battalions completely on his own. They call him The Blood God because some people think he pledged himself to the God of War, though no one's ever been able to confirm this."

Ranboo stared at Tubbo, trying to think of how to respond. He didn't know anything about the other royals a moment ago, but now he knew that apparently King Philza was somehow tied to the literal Goddess of Death, and his son might be pledged to the God of War. Also that they were both terrifying warriors, even though Ranboo knew nothing of the wars the Empire had fought in.

Well okay then.

"Do I wanna know anything about his other kids besides Technoblade?" Ranboo asked, eyeing Tubbo.

"I'll be honest, I really only know about Philza and Technoblade. I think he's got one other son, named William or something. He's the one set to inherit the throne when Philza steps down, but I haven't heard much about him other than that."

"So he's not a bloodthirsty warrior who has mysterious ties to a deity, got it."

This entire conversation had just made Ranboo realize how glad he was not to have been born into a royal family, because he already had a headache just learning about the chaos that apparently was the Antarctic Royal Family.

Tubbo chuckled beside him. "Probably not, but you never know. Anyway, I wonder if Tommy has met Philza or Technoblade himself. If he has, I bet I could ask him about the Angel of Death stuff."

"You really think he'd know anything about that? He's just a servant, right? He probably hasn't even spoken to the royals."

"Probably, but we don't know that for sure. For all we know, he could have *all* the dirt on Philza--"

Suddenly, Tubbo was cut off by the sound of a door creaking open. Glancing towards the front of the room, Ranboo spotted Hannah peeking her head into the room, her eyes quickly

snapping towards where Tubbo and Ranboo were sitting on the bed.

“Tubbo, there you are. Can you come help me in the forge? I’m working on an order for a full suit of armor, but I just got a rush order for a pair of daggers,” Hannah asked, not even sparing a glance at Ranboo since seeing him over was such a common occurrence.

“I get to make daggers?!” Tubbo jumped to his feet, a wide grin stretching across his cheeks. “Hell yeah, c’mon Ranboo, let’s go.”

Hannah snorted at the mention of Ranboo, flashing him a brief smile as he followed Tubbo out of the room. Although Ranboo didn’t know the first thing about blacksmithing, he had spent plenty of time in Hannah’s forge, watching her and Tubbo spend hours upon hours pounding hammers against metal.

The forge room itself had very few decorations. It was a room of stone and metal, the constant clanging bouncing off the heavy walls in a way that would leave your ears ringing for hours. This was the only room in Hannah’s entire shop that didn’t have any flowers in it, save for the twisting vines that were always on her arm. A fire was burning hot in the forge when the three of them walked inside, and Ranboo headed for his usual seat in the corner of the room while Tubbo beelined for his tools.

Behind Hannah’s anvil, there was a diamond chestplate hanging on the rack to cool. The reflection of the flames danced in the bright blue surface of the armor, dancing over the detailed flower engravings that decorated the center of the chestplate. That was Hannah’s signature for her work. She would carve beautiful roses into everything she forged to make sure everyone knew it was one of her creations. It had taken Tubbo ages to learn how to perfectly recreate the signature, although Hannah would also allow him to add his own signature so it was clear the piece had been done by her apprentice.

Tubbo’s signature though was... a bit different stylistically from Hannah’s. While Hannah’s was swirling lines reminiscent of a piece of art, Tubbo’s was a small circle for a head, with two horns sticking out the side. That was it. Every time Ranboo saw Tubbo’s signature sitting just a little bit below Hannah’s, he had to hold back a laugh at how much the two contrasted. Thankfully Hannah didn’t seem to mind the difference, as she’d never asked Tubbo to change it.

Ranboo stayed in the blacksmith shop for the next few hours, chatting idly with Tubbo and watching as he forged a pair of twin daggers from diamond. Outside the shop, Ranboo could see the sky fading from blue to orange, orange to pink, and pink to red until night time took its place. Hannah had said that since this was a rush order, Tubbo had to finish these daggers tonight, and while that usually wouldn’t be an issue, they had somewhere to be.

At one point Ranboo had left for the kitchen, grabbing several slices of bread and cheese for himself, Tubbo, and Hannah to eat. When he brought the food back in and the two smiths took a break from their work to eat the simple dinner, he noticed Tubbo anxiously glancing between the clock and his incomplete blades.

After eating her own meal, Hannah stretched her arms above her head and announced she would be right back, leaving Tubbo and Ranboo alone in the forge. As soon as she

disappeared out the door, Tubbo grabbed Ranboo's arm and yanked him down so they were at eye level.

"I'm not going to finish these before 11," Tubbo whispered.

"You can't miss the meeting tonight!" Ranboo exclaimed, eyes widening.

"I won't. I'm just gonna have to be late is all. But Tommy is gonna be waiting out there at 11, so you need to go get him and take him to the casino," Tubbo told him.

"Wait, me?"

"Yes, you! It's gonna take you a little bit to get over there so you should probably head out soon," Tubbo explained, glancing at the clock again. "I'll be there as soon as I can."

Well... shoot. Ranboo had already been planning to go with Tubbo to pick Tommy up, but he'd kind of been relying on Tubbo to chat with Tommy and keep things from being awkward. He and Tommy hadn't actually spoken one on one, and Ranboo knew he was terrible at making small talk.

But it wasn't like Tubbo could tell Hannah that he had to leave by 11. She knew nothing about Tubbo's 'side job' and would most likely kick him out if she ever caught wind of it. So Tubbo had to finish the daggers, meaning Ranboo had to go alone to bring Tommy back to the casino for Niki's questioning.

Nodding, Ranboo straightened back up as Hannah strolled back in, some of the soot having been washed off her hands and face.

"So, uh, I'll see you tomorrow, Ranboo?" Tubbo asked suddenly, giving Ranboo a very pointed look.

"Oh, you're leaving, Ranboo?" Hannah then asked, blinking at him.

"Uh, yeah, it's getting late and I don't want Niki to be worried," Ranboo shrugged, giving Hannah a half-grin.

"Of course. You don't wanna worry your sister," Hannah agreed, smiling at him. "Tell Niki I wanna stop by the bakery soon so we can catch up. It's been too long since we last talked."

"Sure thing," Ranboo said, giving Hannah an awkward thumbs-up. "Uh, see you later guys!" Hannah and Tubbo both waved as he walked out of the forge, Tubbo still giving him that knowing look as he turned the corner.

Ranboo made his way out of the shop, readjusting the bag on his shoulders and glancing around the streets to see how many people were out as the door clicked shut behind him. As he expected, there were only a few stragglers out and about right now, but he knew that if he went to a busier part of the town then he would run into a lot more people.

Keeping his head down, Ranboo hurried towards the palace, his shoes clicking against the cobblestone path. Thankfully the walk was as peaceful as it had been the night before, and all

Ranboo had to do was convince himself that he didn't need to run to get there in time. It sucked that Tubbo was going to be late though. He knew Niki wouldn't be thrilled about them missing a member while trying to determine the trustworthiness of a new one, but Ranboo also knew that Tubbo didn't have much left to do to complete the daggers. He would probably show up to the casino only a few minutes after Tommy and Ranboo got there.

Soon, the palace came into view. It was a behemoth of a structure, made out of light stone and towering above the rest of the city. Tall spires for towers glowed in the moonlight, and if Ranboo narrowed his eyes, he could make out faint candles flickering inside a few of the high up windows. As Ranboo got closer to the gates, he wondered what part of the palace Tommy stayed in. The servant quarters were likely on the ground floor, so Ranboo really had no clue how Tommy managed to sneak out without being noticed.

Ranboo rushed to the same corner of the fence that they had met Tommy at the night before, making sure to stick to the shadows so the guards at the main gate didn't notice him. He craned his neck up to look up at the top of the fence and heard the murmur of voices. Heart seizing in his chest, he pressed himself against the pillar as the guards patrolling the top of the fence passed by overhead, praying he wouldn't be spotted.

One of the guards laughed at something the other said, and Ranboo listened as the heavy *thump thump* of their boots slowly faded away. Once he figured they were far enough away, he peeled himself from the pillar and tried to look at the top of the fence again.

For a moment, there was nothing, and Ranboo wondered how long he was going to have to wait here for Tommy to show up. Then, there was a flash of movement, and Ranboo was looking up at the blonde boy from the day before.

"Ranboo? Is that you, mate?" Tommy whisper-shouted.

"Yeah, it's me! Tubbo's running late so I came to get you!" Ranboo explained, already digging in his bag for the grappling hook Tubbo had shoved in there. Tommy frowned at the explanation, but didn't protest as Ranboo swung the grappling hook up to the pillar.

He crawled down the side of the wall with relative ease, and when Ranboo struggled to try and get the grappling hook undone, Tommy grabbed the rope and pulled it off in one swift yank. The metal clattered to the ground, and Ranboo muttered an embarrassed thanks as he looped the rope back around itself to put back in his bag.

"So it's just you taking me tonight?" Tommy asked Ranboo once they had started walking away from the palace.

"Yeah, Jack is already at the casino with Niki, Fundy, and Quackity. Tubbo shouldn't be too long either, he just got busy with something," Ranboo explained, hunching his shoulders as the duo made their way back onto the cobblestone street.

"But he'll show up, right?" Tommy asked, a strange trepidation in his voice.

Ranboo glanced to his right, and noticed Tommy staring at the ground. Although Ranboo wasn't always the best at reading other people, he could tell that Tommy seemed... nervous.



He couldn't blame him, considering he was going to have to face Niki's scrutiny very soon.

"Yeah, he'll show up. He just got stuck making a last minute rush order for the blacksmith's shop he works at," Ranboo told him.

Tommy's shoulders relaxed at this, and he nodded. "Got it."

"And don't worry about tonight. Niki isn't going to grill you about anything hard I don't think," Ranboo said in an attempt to reassure Tommy.

"It's okay. I get it. You gotta be able to trust the people on your team, right?" Tommy shrugged, and Ranboo nodded in response. At least he was understanding.

"Anyway, can I ask what the deal with your whole group is anyway? Like, I got that Niki's the leader, but how the hell did you get a casino owner involved in whatever it is you guys do?" Tommy then asked after a beat of silence.

Hm. Of course he'd have questions about their group itself. It was probably harmless to tell him about the details of their group as long as he didn't talk about the heist or any of their past jobs.

"Technically we don't have an official leader, but we all look to Niki to make the decisions so you're pretty much right there," Ranboo said, shoving his hands in his pockets. "Quackity is kind of like our manager I guess? He finds us jobs and sells the stuff we get, while taking out a percentage for himself. He has a lot of connections to the black market through his casino, so it's easier to go through him instead of trying to do all that on our own."

"Alright, that makes sense. So he doesn't actually participate in the jobs with you guys, but you just bring all the shit back and he sells it for you. Got it," Tommy nodded. "What the hell's up with that Fundy guy? He doesn't look like a hybrid like you or Tubbo. He looks like a full on fox."

Ranboo chuckled, having figured Tommy would get confused by Fundy eventually. "To be honest, we're not really sure. He always changes his story. Sometimes he says he was a fox that got cursed by a witch, other times he says he's a hybrid whose genes just leaned really heavily to the fox half, and at one point he even said his mother was a fish though I'm pretty sure he was just messing with us."

"My money's on the hybrid thing," Tommy muttered.

"I dunno, he has a *lot* of fox tendencies that make me think that he might've just been a normal fox that got cursed," Ranboo joked, thinking of all the times Fundy had stolen the food from their bags without thinking because he was hungry.

"Imagine how much that'd suck ass. You're just a fox chilling in the forest without worries, eating berries and shit, and suddenly you gotta go out and be a person. I'd be pissed," Tommy said, readjusting the bag on his shoulder.

Ranboo nodded in agreement. Living life as a normal fox in the forest definitely sounded better than having to actually be a person, at least in the sense that you wouldn't have to worry about laws or money. But Fundy seemed happy enough with his situation, so maybe Tommy was right and he was just a hybrid.

They turned down another street, leading to the abandoned house that the casino was hidden under. Ranboo looked around, searching for any sign of Tubbo, but didn't spot his friend on the road. Hopefully he'd be there soon.

"So Ranboo, no offense but you really don't seem like the thieving type," Tommy said after a bit, glancing to his left before quickly looking away when he met Ranboo's eyes. "How'd you get involved in this type of gig?"

Yeah, he should've figured Tommy would notice that he wasn't as... eager as the others always were when it came to their jobs.

"Well, uh, Niki got me into it. She didn't want me to, but she got involved in this type of stuff when she was younger, and I wanted to help her even if I didn't like the idea of stealing stuff. Then I realized I wasn't that bad at it, so I just stuck with it," Ranboo explained, keeping his eyes on his shoes.

"Have you known Niki for a long time?" Tommy then asked.

"Yeah, she's my sister so-"

Ranboo was cut off by the startled noise that broke from Tommy's throat. Glancing over, he saw Tommy was staring at him with unbridled confusion, eyes running up and down his figure. Ranboo almost laughed at how obvious the silent question was.

"Adopted sister," he clarified, and Tommy made a noise of understanding as his confusion faded. "She found me on the streets and took me in a few years ago, and we've just called each other siblings ever since."

"Got it, that makes a lot more sense," Tommy said, nodding as they walked through the doorway of the abandoned house.

Like usual, the basement was cold and dark as they both hopped off the last step. Purpled eyed both of them as they approached the door to the casino, his steely purple gaze not revealing anything he was thinking as he let them in without a word. While Ranboo didn't know much about Purpled, one thing he did know was that the teenager was more than just a bouncer for the casino. He didn't know exactly what type of jobs he went on for for Quackity, but Ranboo had seen purple sweatshirts stained with blood in Quackity's office more than once.

As always, the casino was in full swing at this time of night. The clinking glasses and muffled laughter wrapped around Ranboo and Tommy as they turned down the hallway towards Quackity's office. Unlike yesterday, Tommy was much less wary as they walked to the door, clearly feeling better about the situation now that he knew what to expect.

Ranboo knocked on the door three times, and it was only seconds before it swung open. Jack gestured for the two to come in, and as the door shut behind them, Ranboo looked around the office to see that everyone except Tubbo was already here.

Two chairs had been set up in front of the poker table, with Niki already seated at one. There was a lighter in her hand, and she was flicking it on and off, the orange flame dancing in the reflection of her eyes. Quackity was settled behind his desk, arms stretched behind his head and his shoes resting on the desk itself. Jack and Fundy had slunk into a corner, and were watching Tommy with curiosity as he and Ranboo made their way to the poker table.

“Where’s Tubbo?” Niki asked, brows furrowing.

“Hannah gave him a rush order for daggers at the last minute. He didn’t want to keep Tommy waiting, so he had me go get him instead. He should be here any-”

Ranboo didn’t even get to finish his sentence before the door to the office was slamming open again, revealing a panting Tubbo whose hair was sticking up all over the place.

“I’m sorry I’m late! The diamonds weren’t bending the right way so it was taking me way longer than usual to harden the blades,” Tubbo said in a rush, the words practically falling out of his mouth.

“It’s okay, Tubbo. Ranboo and Tommy just got here,” Niki said, giving Tubbo a reassuring smile.

Ranboo frowned at his best friend. “Did you sprint all the way here?”

“Yup, sure did,” Tubbo nodded, taking several ragged breaths. “Hi Tommy,” he then added, waving at Tommy as Ranboo walked over to guide him to a chair.

“Sup Tubs,” Tommy said, grinning at him.

Tubbo chuckled as Ranboo dragged him over to two free chairs in the corner of the office. He sat Tubbo down on one, and then settled himself on the other, reaching into his bag for a water pouch to hand to his friend. Tubbo tried to refuse it at first, but Ranboo gave him a look, and Tubbo sighed as he snatched the water pouch out of his hands to drink from.

As Tubbo gulped down the water, all eyes returned to Tommy, who was now left standing in the middle of the room.

“Sit down, Tommy,” Niki said softly, gesturing to the chair across from her as she clicked the lighter off, the flame disappearing.

Tommy did as she said, eyes darting around the room as he settled himself into the seat.

“So, uh, you got questions for me, right?” He asked, laughing nervously.

“I do,” Niki replied, setting the lighter down and folding her hands on top of the poker table. “We just want to get an idea of why you would agree to participate in something like this. What your motivations are and all that.”

“Yeah, of course. That makes sense,” Tommy agreed, fiddling with his hands in his lap.

“So first off, I want to ask where you’re from. You don’t sound like you’re from Essempee originally,” Niki asked, raising an eyebrow at him.

That was a good question for her to start with. Ranboo had noticed Tommy’s accent the day before, but he couldn’t pinpoint where it was from.

“Uh, I’m from the Antarctic Empire,” Tommy admitted, shrinking back into his chair. “I’m a servant for the Empire’s Royal Family, and they brought me with for the Dandelion Festival.”

“Wait, so you’re not kitchen staff?” Tubbo suddenly jumped in.

“No, I was just down in the kitchen grabbing something for, uh, the Prince. But someone in the kitchen staff thought I was working there, so she ordered me to go pick up the spatulas from you. She was kinda scary so I decided to just do what she said,” Tommy explained, shoulders hunching up to his ears.

“The Prince? Which one? Do you know Technoblade or Philza?!” Tubbo asked, his eyes bright and grin stretched wide.

Tommy blinked a few times, looking back down at his hands before responding. “Um, yeah, I know all three of the princes and the King.”

“Three?” Quackity questioned, frowning from behind his desk. “I thought King Philza only had two sons.”

At this, Tommy clenched his jaw, and almost wounded expression flickering across his face. It was so fast Ranboo almost wondered if he’d imagined it.

“He’s got three now. Prince Wilbur, who’s the next in line for the throne, General Technoblade, who leads the military, and Prince Theseus. King Philza adopted him about a year ago,” Tommy explained, never looking up from his hands.

“Huh, good to know,” Quackity commented, folding his hands in his lap.

“What’s your role working for the Empire Royals?” Jack then chimed in.

“Uh, I’m a personal attendant for Prince Theseus for the most part,” Tommy answered.

“So would you say you like your job?” Niki asked, flicking the lighter on and off again.

Tommy frowned. “Yeah, I guess so?”

“You realize that if you get caught participating in this gig with us, you’ll almost certainly lose your job with the Empire, right?” Niki then questioned, raising an eyebrow at Tommy.

To Ranboo’s surprise, Tommy nodded. “Yeah, I get that. I’m not worried about that.”

“So you don’t care that you might lose your job?” Niki pushed, narrowing her eyes at him.

“I mean, if we get caught I suspect I’ll have to worry about something a little bigger than losing my job, given all the secrecy around this,” Tommy said, finally looking up from his lap. “Like jail. That’s a bit bigger of a concern.”

“He’s got a point,” Fundy agreed.

Niki sighed, setting the lighter down again and pushing her hands through her hair. “That’s true, but I don’t get why you want to participate in this in the first place. We haven’t even told you how much you’d be getting paid, but you’re saying you’re willing to risk getting thrown in jail to be a part of it. Forgive me for being blunt but that doesn’t sound like someone who’s desperate for money. That sounds like someone who wants to find out what we’re doing so they can snitch on us.”

“What the- no! I’m not trying to do that, I swear!” Tommy balked, nearly falling out of his seat at the accusation.

“Then why do you want in on this, Tommy?” Niki demanded.

Tommy paused, staring at Niki with wide eyes. The silence stretched on, Tommy opening his mouth and closing it as he struggled to come up with an answer. Ranboo and Tubbo shared a nervous look. If he couldn’t give a convincing answer, they wouldn’t be able to trust him.

After a few beats, Tommy sighed and slumped forward.

“I have an answer, but it’s gonna sound stupid and childish,” he said quietly.

“You can tell us,” Niki encouraged, her voice much softer than it had been a moment before.

Nodding, Tommy looked up from his lap again. “The truth is... I’m just really fucking bored, y’know? Like, don’t get me wrong I’m really grateful I get to live in a palace and not have to worry about food and all that, but I just feel so stifled all the time. It’s the same thing day in and day out, and sure back when I was living on the streets a lot of shit sucked, but at least there was excitement too. Not to mention, the money is still a huge plus.” Tommy then paused, and Ranboo thought he was finished, but then he continued. “Also, I want to help you guys. I work in the palace. I can find a way to get you in. I don’t necessarily need the money, but I know it’s gotta be hard out here for you all or else you wouldn’t be in this line of work.”

It sounded like he was telling the truth, even if his answer was... unexpected. Boredom. That was not what Ranboo would have considered to be a logical reason for wanting to join a heist. At least the part about him wanting to help them made more sense.

Niki’s expression was unreadable. Her nails tapped against the lighter, and everyone stayed silent as they waited for her to respond.

“How old are you?” She finally asked after a few moments.

“I’m sixteen.”

Niki nodded. "Okay, that makes a bit more sense," she muttered. Another silence stretched out between them, the air in the room having turned as tense as a taut wire. The answer was genuine, but it was still up to Niki whether or not they could trust it.

"I want you to know that above all, my job here is to protect this group, Tommy. We're a family, and if you bring any harm to anyone in this group, I won't hesitate to take drastic measures to protect them," Niki then said, her voice having gone dangerously low.

Tommy gulped. "I understand."

Another moment of quiet as Niki ran her nail along the lighter, hesitating to give the final call. Jack and Fundy shared some whispers, while Tommy squirmed in his seat, obviously wondering if he'd said the right things or not.

"Niki, I think you've questioned him enough," Fundy spoke up, "we really don't have a lot of time to plan this. We're either sticking with this guy, or we need to find someone else."

Dropping the lighter, Niki glanced at Fundy, and Ranboo watched a silent conversation pass between the two of them. After a moment, Niki sighed and shoved the lighter in her pocket before turning back to Tommy.

"Sorry, Fundy's right. I've interrogated you enough I think," she said, offering Tommy an apologetic smile. "We just don't bring new people in very often, so I'm a bit paranoid. I'm sure you can understand."

Eyes widening, Tommy nodded. "Oh, yeah, for sure. Totally get it. But you guys can definitely trust me. Like I've said, shit at the palace has gotten boring, and I want to help you guys."

Nodding, Niki stood up and pushed the chair away from the poker table, gesturing for Tommy to do the same. Taking this as their cue, the others circled around the poker table as well, and Tommy ended up sandwiched in between Niki and Tubbo, while Ranboo stood on Tubbo's other side.

Reaching to the middle of the table, Niki grabbed the folded up piece of paper Quackity had left, and smoothed it out so the drawing was visible once more. The charcoal outline of the book had smudged a bit from the folding, but otherwise the drawing was just as Ranboo remembered it.

"Have you ever seen a book that looks like this before?" Niki asked, handing the paper to Tommy.

Taking the wrinkled paper in his hands, Tommy held the drawing close to his face, narrowing his eyes as he looked at the sketch of the book. After a moment, he frowned and shook his head, handing it back to Niki.

"No, I haven't. Why?"

“We’ve been hired to steal that book,” Jack jumped in, resting his hands on the poker table. “According to our contractor, it’s being kept in the palace, specifically inside of Emperor Schlatt’s quarters.”

Suddenly, Tommy stiffened up. “You... you guys are planning on breaking into Schlatt’s room?”

“We know it’s risky,” Jack told him, “but we’re thinking of pulling the heist the night of the sendoff ball. All the royals will be in attendance, meaning most of the guards will be concentrated there and not in the rest of the palace.”

“All the royals *will* be at the sendoff ball, right?” Niki then asked, raising an eyebrow at Tommy.

“Uh, yeah, they will,” Tommy muttered, staring at the paper. “King Dream, Emperor Schlatt, Monarch Eret, King Philza, Prince Wilbur, General Technoblade, and, uh, Prince Theseus.”

“Hell yeah, and *we’ll* be able to swoop in, steal Schlatt’s book, and get out before anyone even notices us. It’ll be a piece of cake!” Tubbo declared with a grin, patting Tommy’s shoulder.

“Yup,” Tommy said quietly, gaze still fixated on the paper. “A piece of cake.”

“What, are you getting cold feet now that you know what we’re doing?” Quackity joked, patting Tommy’s shoulder as he passed by to stand next to Niki.

“Pfft, what? No way,” Tommy scoffed, shaking his head although Ranboo could hear the worry in his voice.

“So do you think you can get us in the palace on the night of the ball?” Fundy asked, raising an eyebrow at Tommy.

Tommy stared at the table for a moment, a crease forming between his brows. Then, he nodded.

“Yeah, I should be able to do that,” he said, looking up to meet Fundy’s eyes.

“Do you think you could also draw a layout of the palace for us beforehand too?” Jack then asked. “That way we know which way we need to go and all that in case we get separated.”

“I can probably draw a map up for you all if that would work?” Tommy suggested.

“Yeah, that works. We don’t need anything too detailed, but a general layout so we know how to get to Schlatt’s room would be ideal,” Jack nodded.

From there, a plan started to take shape. Although they couldn’t plan out the finer details until closer to the night of the ball, they spent the next hour grilling Tommy for everything he knew about the inner workings of the palace. There were guards stationed outside the entrance to the guest wing of the palace, but it was only two of them. Without anyone coming

or going into the guest wing the night of the ball, it wouldn't be hard to knock the guards out so they could steal the book and get back out before being noticed.

Because Tommy worked as an attendant for Prince Theseus, he was most familiar with the guest wing which was rather convenient for their group. According to him, it wasn't actually all that difficult to scale the side of the palace and crawl in through the windows of the guest rooms.

By the end of the night, the tentative plan was this: Ranboo, Tubbo, and Fundy would scale the side of the palace on the night of the ball, and since all the royals would be out of the guest wing, Tommy would let them in the windows of Theseus' room. The reason all five of them couldn't use this method was because guards patrolled the top of the fence, so any more than three of them scaling the walls would be noticed for sure.

Meanwhile, Niki and Jack would walk in right through the front gates. Niki would claim she had a delivery from the bakery to bring into the kitchens, with Jack helping her carry the pastries. Once inside the kitchens, the two would find a way to slip into the main palace and head towards the guest wing. From inside the guest wing, Tommy, Ranboo, Fundy, and Tubbo would take out the guards right as Niki and Jack arrived, and then the entire group would head to Schlatt's room to find the book.

Then they would all leave the way they came, simple as that.

It sounded way too easy, but Ranboo supposed they could work out the finer details as they got closer to the ball. For the time being, it made sense, and it made Ranboo feel a little less sick about this entire heist. At least they had a reasonable plan now.

They arranged to meet back at the casino in two nights. That would hopefully give Tommy enough time to make sure he could get them into the palace through the route he suggested, while also allowing him a few days to draw the map of the palace for them.

That night, both Tubbo and Ranboo walked Tommy back to the palace. Tubbo was thrilled at the events of the evening, talking about how excited he was that Tommy was part of the crew now and that the plan seemed to be falling into place. Meanwhile, Ranboo and Tommy both stayed quiet, letting Tubbo's chatter fill the air between them.

Ranboo was quiet because he wasn't sure what to say, plus Tubbo was better at doing the talking for the both of them around people they weren't super close with yet. Along with that though, Ranboo was staying quiet because he was watching Tommy, trying to read what he was thinking.

He was trying to respond to Tubbo's questions with a casual smile, but Ranboo could see the tension lining his face. He was nervous, and as they got closer to the palace, the dread behind his eyes only became more noticeable.

It made sense that Tommy would be nervous returning to the palace now. He was going to have to lie to the other staff and to the Empire Royals about where he'd been, and try not to seem suspicious for the next few days while literally mapping out the palace. It wasn't an easy task, and Ranboo didn't envy his position right now.



Still, as Tommy climbed back up the fence and disappeared into the shadows towards the palace, Ranboo couldn't help but wonder if there was something more. Even though it wouldn't make sense for him to be keeping any more secrets, Ranboo still had that same sense he'd had the day before. That Tommy wasn't telling them everything.

He really *really* hoped they didn't regret deciding to trust him.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry this chapter was almost entirely dialogue but uhh yeah a lot of talking needed to be done

yeah so Tommy really got himself into a pickle, now hasn't he?? at least he had a cover story prepared to give to Niki lmao

anyway I hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! please let me know what you thought in the comments, they really make my day :D

feel free to check out my mcyt tumblr @bonesandthebees I meme a lot on there <3

# mushroom pies

## Chapter Summary

Tommy has to test his map making skills

## Chapter Notes

hey hey everyone! sorry this update is a bit late, I've been vibing with a bunch of other ideas bouncing around the inside of my skull like a ping pong ball, but I finally managed to actually completely outline the rest of this fic sooo I finally know exactly where I'm going each chapter thank god

ANYWAY ty all for all the love and support so far! there are some very fun things coming!

TW for a very brief mention of child kidnapping in a flashback

time to go make myself a grilled cheese for dinner

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As soon as the window to Tommy's room shut behind him, he collapsed on the ground in a heap.

Ever since he'd been told the plan for the heist at Quackity's casino, the same thing was playing on repeat in his mind like a broken record. *Holy shit, we're robbing Schlatt. Holy shit, we're robbing Schlatt. Holy shit-*

Tommy should've expected that they were going to be robbing someone in the palace. Why the hell else would they need to get someone who worked there on their side? But he hadn't thought they were going to go so far as to rob one of the royals. That seemed like the type of risk Niki wouldn't be willing to take.

But Tommy had to admit, the plan they had so far was solid. It was true that most of the guards were going to be present at the sendoff ball instead of patrolling the guest wing. If there was ever a time to break in there, it would be then.

Not to mention, they were robbing *Schlatt*. A man with few—if any—morals, who had a dictator-like hold on his country. Tommy didn't want to imagine the kind of punishment

Schlatt would come up with if he caught thieves that were responsible for stealing from him. It would be a horrible sight to witness, that was for sure.

Though Tommy had to admit, if there was anyone in the palace they were going to rob, he was glad it was Schlatt. Wilbur had told him how uncaring and cruel the man was towards his own nation. He was an alcoholic dictator who wanted power and nothing else. If anyone deserved to get robbed blind, it was that bastard. At the very least, Tommy didn't have to feel bad about stealing from anyone he actually liked.

Scratch that, stealing from Schlatt didn't just relieve Tommy of the guilt from stealing from someone he liked. No, it made him *excited* for the heist. Despite how risky it was, Tommy was already delighting in the mental image of what Schlatt's rage would look like when he realized what happened. He was going to be furious, and it was going to be hilarious for Tommy to witness.

Of course though, that also begged the question of what the hell it was that Schlatt had. Tommy was sure he'd never seen anything like the book Niki had shown him, but since he had laid eyes on the charcoal sketch of that skull on the front, an uneasy feeling had settled under his skin. It was as if he could feel the skull through the walls of the palace, watching him from wherever it was hidden in Schlatt's room. What the hell was inside that book that would make someone want to steal it this badly? And how did Schlatt even end up with it in the first place?

There were so many questions burning in his mind, searing through his thoughts and blocking out everything else. Not just about the book itself, but also about how he was going to pull this off. The sendoff ball created a bit of a tricky situation for Tommy considering Prince Theseus was expected to be present at the ball. He would have to find a way to sneak out, change out of the royal regalia he was going to be wearing, and then help his friends go through with the job. Much easier said than done.

So long story short, Tommy had a lot of conflicting thoughts about this whole deal. Even just thinking about it was twisting his stomach into knots, and he couldn't tell whether it was more out of excitement or fear. Probably a healthy mixture of both.

All at once though, fear quickly took the front seat in Tommy's battling thoughts when he heard a sharp knock at his door.

"Uh, who is it?" Tommy asked, struggling to keep his voice even.

"It's Techno," he heard his brother's gruff voice call out from the other side. "I thought I heard a loud bang in there. Is everything alright?"

Shit. The window slamming shut must've been what he heard. Stupid piglins and their heightened hearing. Since Wilbur wasn't at the door with Techno, Tommy could only assume he'd already gone to sleep, so that was good at the very least.

Still, he had to deal with Techno now.

“It’s fine!” Tommy replied, struggling to shove his satchel under the blankets on his bed. “I just tripped on the rug. Don’t worry though, I’m totally fine.”

“You sure? It sounded like a pretty hard fall,” Techno pointed out as Tommy tried to yank his boots off.

“Yup, I’m 100% fi- SHIT!”

Tommy overdid the strength with which he was pulling his boots off, and the one he’d been tugging on ended up flying into the wall and sent him falling on his ass. He cursed as he hit the ground, knowing this definitely wasn’t going to help his case with Techno.

“Tommy? You okay?” Tommy groaned into his fingers instead of responding to Techno, already knowing any arguments at this point were futile. “I’m coming in, okay?”

The door opened and Tommy laid down on the ground, one boot half on his foot, and his traveling cloak still wrapped around him. If the shoes didn’t already give it away, the cloak spread out behind him like a fan certainly did.

Techno shut the door behind him, walking over to Tommy when he spotted him on the floor.

“You look like you’ve had a bit of a night,” Techno commented, folding his arms over his chest as he looked down at Tommy. In the faint moonlight pouring in through the window, Tommy could just make out the confused frown casting slanted shadows across his brother’s face.

“Yeah, you could say that,” Tommy grumbled, not bothering to try and get up.

“You snuck out of the palace, didn’t you?”

Well, no use in hiding it. It wasn’t like he could come up with a good explanation for his current predicament anyway.

“Yup,” Tommy answered, popping the ‘p’ for effect.

Techno stared at him for a moment, before nodding. “Are you going out to get into trouble?”

Tommy stayed silent this time. Even though the answer was a resounding ‘yes’, that didn’t mean he had to admit it. It was the lesson of not incriminating yourself. Techno had been the one to teach him about that.

After a beat, Techno sighed. “So that’s a yes.” Tommy opened his mouth to protest, but Techno held up a finger to shush him. “I don’t really care what you’re doing. I trust you to know the difference between fun trouble and bad trouble. Can you do me one favor though?”

Frowning, Tommy pushed himself up on his elbows. “Uh, sure?”

“Try not to blow yourself up, alright? That’d be kind of inconvenient to deal with considering we’re in a foreign country and all right now, not to mention Dad would be pretty upset and we don’t need to give the old man that kind of stress.”

At his brother's deadpan humor, Tommy snorted before nodding. "I'll try my best."

Giving him an approving look, Techno held out a hand to Tommy, and Tommy took it gratefully. Techno pulled him to his feet and dropped the hand, before reaching out to ruffle his hair. "Seriously though, be careful. And if you need anything, feel free to come to me and I can take care of things."

"I'm not gonna need you to kill anyone for me," Tommy deadpanned.

Techno held his hands up in mock surrender. "Hey man, you said it, not me. For all you know I could've been implying that I'd buy you a cake or something. Maybe get you an emotional support pet. Not everything is about murder, y'know?"

Tommy rolled his eyes and put his hands on Techno's back to shove him towards the door. "Alright alright, now let me go to sleep. I'm fucking exhausted."

"I'm leaving, don't worry." Techno opened the door to Tommy's room again and spared one more look at him. Beneath the joking, Tommy could see the thin line creasing his brows and the tightness around his eyes that told Tommy exactly what he wasn't saying out loud.

Despite this though, Techno only gave one more half wave before he left Tommy's room, the door clicking shut behind him. As soon as his room was empty again, Tommy collapsed onto his bed and groaned at his bed canopy. This was already getting complicated. Techno knew he was up to something, and while he trusted Techno the most out of his family members to keep something like this a secret, he also knew that it wasn't ideal. If shit went wrong, Techno would eventually intervene, which would definitely lead to Wilbur and Phil following suit. The absolute last thing Tommy needed was his family finding out what he was up to, especially now that he knew what it was his new group of friends was trying to do.

He was getting way in over his head. Tommy could tell that already.

But he was already here. He couldn't exactly back out now, so he was just going to have to deal with the obstacles as they appeared.

First thing he had to do though: he had to map out the palace.

That night, Tommy fell asleep bundled in his traveling cloak, muscles too sore from his climbing to even bother changing. When he woke up the next morning, the sun was already high in the sky and the palace was bustling with activity.

After freshening himself up and eating the breakfast that had been left at his door, Tommy found himself wandering around the halls of the palace with a sketchbook and pen in hand. Most of the royals were off in yet another meeting, so Tommy was taking advantage of the free time as much as he could.

He had never been much of an artist. Of course he had doodled random shit before out of boredom, but mindless doodling versus actually trying to draw a map were two very different things. He created a rough layout sketch of the guest wing of the palace, but had already gotten the left and right sides mixed up within the first twenty minutes and had to start over.

His shoes thumped softly against the carpeted floors, the scratching of his charcoal against paper echoing off the stone walls that surrounded him. He wandered through the guest wing before making his way out into the main palace. At one point he ran into Puffy who asked what he was doing, and Tommy bullshitted an excuse about trying to find secret passageways once again by mapping out the palace, which made Puffy laugh. He trailed through the main foyer of the palace, back through the kitchens (though taking care to avoid the woman who had bossed him around that one time), and said a brief hello to Ponk when he found himself in the palace infirmary by accident.

Ponk was the physician in charge of caring for everyone in the palace. Tommy had met him on his first day in the palace when he tried to slide down the bannister of the grand staircase and ended up falling off. The stunt had only gotten him a slight lump on his head, but Dream had insisted he go to the infirmary just to make sure everything was fine despite Tommy's many protests.

Overall, Ponk was a pretty fun person to talk to, though Tommy hadn't had much interaction with him since that first day. They said their hello's, and after a brief conversation, he headed back out towards the main foyer.

It was there he ran into Sam.

So focused on sketching his map, Tommy would've ran straight into him if he hadn't spoken up before they collided.

"Hey Tommy, what are you up to?"

Glancing up from the map (that was actually coming along rather decently since he'd gotten the hang of it), Tommy's eyes widened at the sight of the palace guard.

"Oh, uh, trying to find more secret passageways. Y'know, the usual," Tommy shrugged, angling his map away from Sam as subtly as he could.

"Ah, any luck so far?" Sam questioned, raising an eyebrow.

"No," Tommy said, pouting to add to the effect. "But I mean, what else am I gonna do in here all day besides look for these things? I'm sure they're here. I mean, look at this fuckin' place!"

At this, Sam frowned. "You know you're allowed to leave the palace, right?"

Suddenly, Tommy's entire act was swept aside as he blinked at Sam.

"Huh?"

"You can go out and explore the kingdom if you want. There's a nice little town square type of thing just down the road from the palace. It's got some fun shops you'd probably have a fun time looking through."

...what.

This whole time he could've left? This WHOLE time?! Why the hell did no one tell him? Here he was, so bored out of his mind that he agreed to join a heist, when he could've just walked out of the palace of his own free will the entire time.

Of course, he never really knew why he wouldn't have been allowed to leave. He just assumed he would've been told no if he tried it.

"B-But isn't that a security risk or something?" Tommy questioned.

"I mean, usually it would be, but no one in Essempee really knows the face of Prince Theseus. Not to mention, most people still don't even know that there's a third prince of the Empire in general. As long as you don't walk out in your full Antarctic Empire regalia with your crown and everything, I'd say you're fine," Sam explained. "Did no one ever tell you this?"

"Wh- no! No one ever fucking told me this! Why do you think I've been wandering in here for the past several weeks?!" Tommy demanded.

Sam shrugged. "I assumed you just didn't want to."

Holy shit. Tommy felt like an idiot.

Tommy glanced down at the half-finished map in his hands. While he should stay here and finish drawing it up before going out to explore, he was already bored from hours of walking around aimlessly.

Surely he could take a break, right?

"Bye Sam!" Tommy called out, folding the map up as he sprinted back towards his room.

Chuckling, Sam waved goodbye to him as he headed in the direction of Ponk's infirmary. Distantly, Tommy wondered if Sam was hurt because he wasn't sure why he'd be going to the infirmary otherwise. But Tommy didn't dwell on it for too long because he had much more important matters to attend to.

Sprinting to his room, Tommy snatched up the satchel he'd used during his escapades the previous nights and made sure all of his stuff was still in it. Then, after making sure he had everything he needed on him, he rushed out of his room once more.

Hot summer air wrapped around him as he rushed out of the palace and into the courtyard. Once again, the pale bricks reflected the sunlight beating down, temporarily blinding him as he beelined towards the gates.

He wasn't even sure what he was going to do once he got out. All he knew was that it would be nice to get out of the palace during the day, and not have to scale the palace walls to do it.

"Oi, you heading out?" A gruff voice asked Tommy as he neared the main gate to the palace courtyard.

Tommy nodded. "Yup, sure am."

“Make sure to be back before sunset,” the guard told him.

With that, the metal gate creaked as it was yanked open by two guards standing on either side of it. Tommy waved at both guards as he headed out, and neither one reacted. What bitches.

The main road that led from the palace sloped down into the town square. Tommy had made this trek through the trees off the side of the road several times now, but it was quite different to do it out in the open in the middle of the day. A few people passed him by on the road, heading up towards the palace with arms full of goods to be delivered. Tommy kept an eye out for Tubbo, wondering if he had any more spatulas to deliver to the kitchens. But to his disappointment, he didn't see any boy with goat horns on the road.

As he neared the bottom of the hill where the town square was settled, a faint murmur rose up. The murmur grew louder as he approached, shifting from nonsensical background noise to an actual bustling hum of voices and music. At night, this part of town was mostly deserted. But during the day, this place was lively as could be.

Tommy found himself passing between different people dressed in brightly-colored clothes, chatting and laughing in their individual groups. The smell of roasting meat wafted through the air, making Tommy's mouth water. This part of the town seemed to be some kind of area for food stands, and Tommy's eyes widened as he saw roasted meat get skewered onto sticks, vibrant fruits get passed over to children, and steaming bowls of soup balance precariously on cobblestones.

His stomach growled loudly. Tommy flushed, though no one was close enough to hear the sound. He should probably get himself some lunch.

Taking a deep breath, Tommy immediately smelled something different from the rest of the food in the market. It was sweeter. A tangy, sweet scent that reminded Tommy of sugary pastries and warm loaves of bread. A bakery.

Following his nose, Tommy left the market behind and made his way into the smaller streets of the town. It didn't take long for him to find the source of the delicious scent.

There was a bakery nestled in between an apothecary and a tailor shop. A painting of a large cake sat in the main window, and the door chimed as a customer left the shop. Tommy was hit with that scent again, the tangy sweet one that had led him over there, and realized it was the smell of freshly-baked bread. *That* was what he wanted.

Stepping inside the bakery, Tommy found himself relaxing almost instantly. The shop was small, with only a few scattered tables here and there, surrounded by large display cases of different pastries and breads. Beelining towards one of the display cases, Tommy's eye caught a glimpse of a delicately frosted cake decorated with cinnamon and apple slices. Could he eat an entire cake? No, not right now. But he damn well could try.

Before he could lift his head to ask the baker how much the cake was, he heard a familiar soft voice call his name.

“Tommy?”



Glancing up, Tommy almost jumped back when he was met with a confused-looking Niki standing behind the counter.

“Niki? What are you doing here?” Tommy asked, frowning at her.

It was odd, seeing her standing in the middle of a bakery like this. Her pink hair was tied up into a loose bun, her black cloak having been replaced with a white apron splotted with different shades of icing. Her hands, which only the night before had been flicking that lighter on and off as she interrogated him, were now dusted with flour. Instead of a lighter, she was only holding a yellow rag between her thin fingers.

This was surreal.

“I work here,” Niki answered, frowning back at him. “What are *you* doing here?”

She... worked at a bakery? Of course he'd figured all the thieves had day jobs. Hell, he'd met Tubbo while he was making a delivery for the blacksmith he apprenticed for. It only made sense for the others to have day jobs too. But for some reason, Tommy just hadn't been expecting Niki to work in a bakery of all things.

“I just wanted to get some lunch and thought this place looked good,” Tommy shrugged. “I had no idea you worked here.”

Niki stared at him for a moment, as if she was trying to figure out if he was lying. After a beat though, her frown faded and a soft smile took its place.

“You came to get lunch at a bakery? Shouldn't you have some real food instead of sweets?” Niki asked, a teasing lilt in her tone.

“I'm a Big Man who can have whatever he wants for lunch,” Tommy argued, puffing out his chest dramatically.

Niki giggled at the gesture. “Well, if this is your lunch, I insist you have something that's not just sugar first,” she said, glancing down to the display case. “We have some mushroom hand pies that I personally really enjoy with a cup of tea. Also the cheese bread with some melted butter on top is to die for.”

In the display case, Tommy instantly saw what she was referring to. There was a group of small pies shaped into triangles, the golden crust scored across the top to reveal a brown mushroom mixture underneath. The crust seemed flaky, and Tommy could imagine how it would crunch when he bit into it. Next to the pies there was a braided loaf of bread. In between the twists, dark orange cheese peeked out, having been swirled into the center of the golden loaf.

Tommy frowned again. He really liked the look of that cake, but Niki was saying the exact same thing Phil would tell him if he was here. Besides, those mushroom pies did look pretty good.

“Fine, I’ll have two of the pies and one slice of bread. Do you guys also have tea here?” Tommy asked.

Niki nodded. “Yup. Choose a table and I’ll bring it to you.”

Smiling at her, Tommy found a table in the far corner nearest to the counter, and settled down there. It was only a few moments before Niki walked over holding a plate that had the pies and bread on it, along with a steaming cup of tea. Tommy glanced at the menu hanging above one of the display cases and dug out seven Primes from his coin bag to hand to Niki, and she shook her head.

“Tommy, you don’t need to pay. I know you,” she said, shaking her head at the offered coins.

“Niki, c’mon, take it. I’ve told you the palace pays me well anyway,” Tommy said, not giving her any room for argument. He had way more Primes than he needed back in his room anyway. Of course he was going to pay for his damn lunch.

Sighing, Niki took the Primes from him, but he could see how her smile had warmed significantly as she put the Primes in the cash box behind the counter.

Tommy bit into one of the mushroom pies, and struggled to hold back a moan at the taste. Holy shit, it was *amazing*. The outside crust was buttery, tangy, and practically melted in his mouth yet still had that perfectly satisfying crunch when he bit into it. Inside the pie, the mushrooms were mixed with what he guessed were onions and some kind of herbs, and it went so fucking well with the pie crust.

In short, this was the best goddamn mushroom pie he’d ever had.

“Niki, did you bake these yourself?” Tommy asked between a mouthful of pie.

“Yup, sure do. Everything in here is baked by me,” Niki told him. Although she was looking away from him, he could hear the pride in her words. She clearly knew what a good baker she was.

“Well, this is fucking amazing. I’m shocked you’re not rich off this shit already,” Tommy said, taking another large bite of the pie.

“I don’t own this place unfortunately, so I only get a small cut of the profits,” Niki explained, eyes drifting to stare at one of the display cases.

“Really?” Tommy was surprised, but he figured it made sense. If she owned a bakery this successful, why would she be moonlighting as a thief?

“Yes. But I hope to own my own bakery one day,” Niki told him, flashing him another grin.

“With pies like these-” Tommy said as he stuffed the rest of the first pie in his mouth, “you definitely will.”

Niki laughed at the way Tommy’s cheeks had puffed out as he ate. Tommy gave her a thumbs up as he washed down the rest of the pie with his tea, and then honed in on the cheese bread.

Like the pie, it was fucking fantastic. A piece of art trapped in the form of food. Fluffy bread swirled with melted cheese that was just perfectly burnt on the edges. God, Tommy needed to come here every day.

The shop fell quiet as Tommy continued to eat his lunch. Niki worked behind the counter, kneading some kind of dough with her hands and humming to herself as she worked. Tommy sipped at his tea and munched at his second pie, still eyeing the cinnamon apple cake in the display case. Now *that* would be a good dessert.

Right as he shoved the last bite of the second pie in his mouth, the door chimed as someone else came in.

“Hey Niki, can we get lu- Tommy?!”

Glancing up, Tommy saw Ranboo and Tubbo standing in the doorway of the bakery, looking just as surprised as Niki had been when he wandered in here. He gave them a small wave, swallowing the last bit of his pie and washing it down with more tea.

“Sup Tubbo, Ranboob.”

“Hey man!” Tubbo said, waving at Tommy. “Came here for some of Niki’s amazing baking?”

“I didn’t even know she worked here. I just smelled something really good and ended up here,” Tommy explained, sitting back in his chair.

“That’s ironic,” Ranboo chuckled.

“It sure is,” Niki agreed. “So do you and Tubbo want some lunch, Ranboo?”

“Yes please!” Both boys chorused.

Niki giggled. “Alright. You both go back to the room and I’ll bring you your usual.”

Tubbo immediately looked over to Tommy again. “Tommy, you wanna come with? You can hang with us while we eat!”

Tommy glanced between Tubbo, who looked like he was about to burst with excitement, and Ranboo, who was giving him a nervous but genuine smile. Then he looked over to Niki, who had narrowed her eyes but didn’t say anything.

Well, he wasn’t going to go back to the palace yet, so why not?

“Sounds good to me,” Tommy said, pushing to his feet.

Tubbo cheered and grabbed Tommy’s wrist, dragging him behind the counter and towards a door Tommy hadn’t noticed till now. Ranboo opened the door for them and Tubbo led Tommy inside, with the door clicking shut behind them.

The room itself wasn’t terribly small, but it wasn’t very large either. There were two beds pressed against the walls, along with two desks on each side of the room and another small

door in the back corner which Tommy suspected led to a bathroom. Along with that, there was a small kitchenette in another corner that didn't seem to be all that used. The bed on the right side of the room was neatly made with a few thin blankets layered on top of each other. The bed on the left side of the room was slightly less put together, a massive pile of blankets shoved together and twisted in a way that told Tommy the sleeper did not bother to make the bed after they woke up.

Ranboo walked into the room and headed towards the messy bed and Tubbo followed behind. Both sat down on the edge of the bed, and Tommy figured that must've been Ranboo's bed if this was Ranboo and Niki's room like he assumed.

Tommy was unsure of where to sit for a moment, not wanting to crowd the bed with three people but not wanting to possibly incur Niki's wrath by sitting on her bed either. After a moment of silent debate, he settled down in a chair on Ranboo's side of the room facing the bed.

"Tommy, my man, Big T," Tubbo started as soon as Tommy sat down, smirking at him. "I got some questions for you."

Tommy frowned. More questions? "I thought my interrogation with Niki last night was kinda the end of all the questions."

"Oh, not for that reason," Tubbo said, waving the thought off, "I already trust you. But you're the first person I've met who's had contact with the royals. *Close* contact with the royals."

Beside Tubbo, Ranboo sighed. "Not this again."

"Yes, this again!" Tubbo declared. "Tommy, since you work for the Antarctic Empire, you gotta tell us all you know about the Angel of Death and the Blood God."

*Oh.* Tommy should've expected questions about this. Of course he'd heard all the rumors about the Angel of Death and the Blood God. He used to hear those names whispered on the streets of the Empire with the kind of reverence that was usually only reserved for the actual gods. The people of the Antarctic Empire both loved and feared the Angel of Death that guarded their kingdom, and there were countless rumors about how many people the Blood God had slaughtered in his many conquests.

Then, of course, Tommy met both of them and realized the rumors made them seem *way* cooler than they actually were.

"You guys want the honest to god truth about the Angel and the Blood God?" Tommy asked, lowering his voice for dramatic effect.

Tubbo's eyes widened and he leaned over, while worry tightened Ranboo's expression.

"Yes, tell us," Tubbo whispered.

"The truth is," Tommy whispered back, "they're fucking losers."

Tubbo's expression fell. "Huh?"

“They’re really not that cool!” Tommy said, throwing his hands in the air. “Don’t get me wrong, they’re both great guys, but they’re not nearly as scary as all those rumors make ‘em seem. Phil’s an old man who never puts shoes on to make himself tea at 3 am and then asks why his feet are cold in the morning. Meanwhile, Techno just spends all his free time either reading or talking about mythology shit that no one else gets. Like, it’s cool to hear about don’t get me wrong, but he’s such a nerd.”

Now Tubbo and Ranboo had two very contrasting expressions. Tubbo looked as if Tommy had just kicked his puppy, while Ranboo seemed to be about two seconds away from bursting out in unrestrained laughter.

“Okay, that’s really kinda funny actually,” Ranboo said, grinning at Tommy. “You made them sound so scary, Tubbo.”

“Oh, they can be terrifying when they want to be, don’t get me wrong,” Tommy corrected immediately. “Trust me, I’ve seen them when they’re mad. Those two are not to be fucked with.”

Tommy remembered the only time he’d ever seen Techno completely give into the voices in his head, choosing blood over words when there was no other option available. He remembered how Phil had swooped in from the sky, his feathers looking as if they could be made of razors, and his eyes like chips of ice.

Tommy remembered the screams from the gang who had tried to kidnap him as they were systematically slaughtered by the man who would become his father and the man who would become his brother. He remembered how the air had reeked of blood, and how Wilbur had held a bruised and battered Tommy close to his chest, not letting him see the carnage the other two were waging.

They had deserved it. That was what Tommy knew. It was a gang that was running a child servant ring, kidnapping orphans off the street and shipping them to other kingdoms to be indentured servants. Tommy had had run-ins with them before, but that time they had almost caught him.

Almost.

But they didn’t. Because over the past few months at that point, he’d befriended Wilbur, who had in turn introduced Tommy to Phil and Techno. It wasn’t long after that incident with the gang that Phil brought up the idea of making things official and adopting Tommy. And despite having witnessed the bloodshed of the Angel of Death and the Blood God firsthand, Tommy had come to the realization that he felt safe with them.

So yes, the Angel of Death and the Blood God were terrifying when they wanted to be. But they were also lame. It was a balance.

“Are you allowed to just call them by their names like that?”

Shaking himself out of the memories, Tommy blinked to see Ranboo giving him a curious look.

“Huh?”

“You called King Phil just ‘Phil’, and called General Technoblade ‘Techno’. Is that allowed for you as a servant?”

Oh shit. That was a slip up on his end.

“Yup, it’s totally fine,” Tommy said. It wasn’t technically a lie. Although according to custom the needed to be referred to by their titles, none of the servants in the palace actually did so unless it was a formal occasion. Phil had always been insistent that he didn’t need everyone calling him King every few minutes, and he found the whole custom a bit ridiculous. “They don’t mind.”

“Huh, interesting,” Ranboo said. “What about the other two? Prince Wilbur and Prince Theseus?” He then asked, clearly wanting to move the topic on from the Angel of Death and the Blood God.

“Oh, Wilbur?” Tommy snorted. “He can’t fight for shit. He’s not terrible with a crossbow, but I once saw him try to slice a training dummy with a sword and he ended up tripping over his own feet.” He laughed at the memory. “Wilbur’s not a fighter, not in the physical sense at least. But when it comes to words, he’s a master at it. He’s so good at persuading people I almost thought he had some kind of siren magic, but he doesn’t. He’s just great at twisting people’s words so they’ll agree to do what he wants.”

“Guess it makes sense why he’s the one in line for the throne and not the general,” Ranboo muttered.

“What about Prince Theseus?” Tubbo then suddenly spoke up.

Tommy glanced up at his name, and quickly tried to school his expression to look disinterested. “What about him?”

“What’s he like?” Tubbo asked, the excitement having returned to his eyes. “I didn’t even know he existed until you told us about him. You’re the personal attendant for him, right? Is he a fighter like Techno, or is he more of a wordsman like Wilbur?”

Oh great. Now he had to talk about himself in the third person. This was awkward.

Then again, he could totally make himself sound cool as hell here and these two would be none the wiser.

“Well, Prince Theseus is great honestly,” Tommy started, resting his arms behind his head. “He’s the best of both Wilbur and Techno. He’s a great fighter, super fast and hardly ever gets caught! But he’s also pretty damn good with his words too. He charms all the ladies, he’s got so many girls practically falling over for him, it’s a bit ridiculous to deal with sometimes,” he said, chuckling for additional effect. “He’s such a big man. Very tall, very handsome. Fucking great guy overall.”

“How old is he?” Ranboo then asked. “Is he around the same age as Wilbur and Techno?”

“Nah, he’s a bit younger. He’s the same age as me actually. Sixteen. That’s why I got assigned to be his personal servant,” Tommy said, coming up with the lie on the spot.

“It sounds like you admire him a lot,” Tubbo pointed out, something strange in his voice.

“You could say that,” Tommy shrugged.

At that, Tubbo narrowed his eyes, and Tommy immediately worried if he laid it on too thick. Tubbo opened his mouth to speak again, when Ranboo suddenly cut in.

“What’s taking Niki so long with our food?” He asked.

Suddenly, Tubbo’s suspicious look disappeared. “Wait, yeah, it’s been a while. Where is she?”

The three of them got up at the same time and headed towards the door. Ranboo cracked it open and peaked out, before quickly shutting it again.

“She’s out there with a customer I haven’t seen before. Guess we gotta wait.”

“Wait, if you haven’t seen them before, who are they?” Tubbo asked, reaching for the door again.

“Tubbo! We can’t let him see us!” Ranboo hissed, slapping Tubbo’s hand away.

“Oh shush, we can be sneaky,” Tubbo shot back, reaching for the door again.

Ranboo sighed as Tubbo opened the door just a crack, and suddenly two voices filled the room. There were Niki’s soft tones, combined with a man’s deeper voice.

Tommy froze the second he heard the man’s voice. He would recognize that voice anywhere.

It was Wilbur.

“So is this your bakery?” Wilbur was asking.

Tommy cursed under his breath and pressed himself up against the wall beside the door. He couldn’t let Wilbur see him. Absolutely couldn’t. If he did, all of this would fall apart.

“Tommy, are you alright?” Tubbo whispered to him.

“I’m fine. But that’s Prince Wilbur out there, and if he sees me he’ll recognize me instantly,” Tommy whispered back. “I don’t want anyone in the palace to be able to trace me back to you guys in case things go wrong and I get caught or something. So he can’t see me.”

Both Tubbo and Ranboo’s eyes widened, and then Tubbo leaned towards the crack in the door again, as if he was trying to get a better look.

“No, this isn’t my bakery. I just work here,” Niki said in response to Wilbur’s question.

“But you make all of these yourself?” Wilbur continued.

“Yup, I sure do.”

“Well, it all looks amazing. I’ll have to bring my little brother here sometime. He’s got quite the sweet tooth,” Wilbur said, laughing a bit.

Tommy had to hold back a smile. Wilbur knew him way too well.

“If you want I can wrap something up for you to bring back to him?” Niki suggested.

“Oh, yes please. That sounds great. Do you think I could get two slices of that apple cinnamon cake right there?”

Oh my *god*. He had no idea whether to be laughing or terrified right now. On the one hand, this was a very frightening moment for Tommy where he could get caught any second now. On the other hand, Wilbur was getting him that cake he had wanted so badly earlier.

Dammit Wilbur.

“Sure thing!”

There was a rustling sound from what Tommy presumed was Niki taking out the cake.

“So do you like this part of Essempee?” Wilbur then asked as the rustling sounds continued. “I’m not from around here, so I’m just curious what a local thinks of the place.”

“I do. We get a lot of foot traffic here so it’s good for business,” Niki replied.

“I’ve heard there was a string of robberies nearby recently though. A noble’s house got broken into, right?”

The rustling stopped for a moment, and Tommy saw Tubbo and Ranboo both grimace. Ah, so they must’ve had something to do with that robbery then.

“Yes, there are robberies sometimes,” Niki said as the rustling of the box and the cake resumed. “But I don’t think it’s as bad as it could be. After all, the only one’s getting stolen from are the people who can certainly afford it.”

There was a questioning noise, and Tommy could practically see Wilbur’s confused face.

“Huh, that’s not the kind of opinion I’d expect from a baker. Is there a harsh class divide between the rich and the poor here?” Wilbur pushed.

“You could say that. It used to be much worse, but ever since King Dream was crowned, the welfare programs have improved a lot. But I’d still say the nobles have much more wealth than they need,” Niki explained, her voice calm in the way a wasp’s net was calm before you poked it. “But I suppose a wealthy man such as yourself wouldn’t exactly agree with that notion, now would you?”

There was a beat of silence from Wilbur’s end, and Tommy desperately wished he could see Wilbur’s face right now.



“I’m not saying I disagree with it. I actually have some rather strong opinions myself on wealth inequality, hence why I was asking you about what it’s like here in Essempee,” Wilbur said, before laughing awkwardly. “Is it that easy to tell my status though?”

Niki snorted. “Yeah, it really is. Your clothes might not be flashy, but the craftsmanship is fairly obvious to anyone who looks closely. Also, you have way too much gold jewelry on you to be anything less than a noble.”

“Ah shit, I forgot to take the rings off,” Wilbur cursed. There was another beat and some shuffling sounds, and Tommy imagined Wilbur was pulling his rings off and shoving them into his pockets. “I’m, uh, part piglin so I tend to prefer to have some gold-”

“It’s fine, I get it,” Niki reassured, sounding much less tense than she had a moment before. “Here’s your cake slices by the way. That’ll be twelve Primes.”

“Here you go.” There was the sound of metal clanking as Wilbur dropped the coins on the counter. “What’s your name by the way?”

“I’m Niki.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Niki. I’m Prince Wilbur of the Antarctic Empire, but don’t call me prince or anything. Just call me Wilbur, please.”

There was a stunned silence. Tommy had never so badly wanted to peek out of a door in his life.

“It’s, um, a pleasure to meet you, sir. I’m so sorry if I came off as rude earlier-”

“No, don’t be. I really appreciate your insight.” Another rustling noise as Wilbur picked the cake box off the counter, and the chime of the door as Wilbur went to leave. “I’ll be back for more of your pastries, Niki. And I’ll bring my little brother too!”

And with that, the door clicked shut, and Tommy slumped against the door in relief.

That was close. Way too close.

At least he had cake to look forward to after he got back to the palace.

## Chapter End Notes

sorry this was a bit more of a filler chapter, I hope it was still enjoyable all the same!

also yes while tommy is a dumbass who could've gone out to explore the kingdom during the day, the palace technically 'closes' after sunset so that's why he still has to sneak out at night for heist-related meetings

anyway I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter! next one will be a bit more action-filled, I promise. make sure to leave a comment if you enjoyed! I don't reply to most, but I see all of them and they make me very happy <3

(my tumblr is @bonesandthebees if you wanna follow me there I make a lot of shitposts)

# three teens walk into a potion shop

## Chapter Summary

Tubbo, Ranboo, and Tommy take things into their own hands

## Chapter Notes

HEY GUYS IM ALIVE

sorry it's been a hot minute since I've updated this, my brain has just been going BRRRR with so many different au ideas so now i've got like several fic ideas going on rn, but this is still my number 1 priority!

anyway i wanted to say thank you all so much for all the support so far, you guys are so sweet and I'm really glad you're all enjoying the story! hope you guys like this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Once Tommy had been fully brought onboard with the plan, things began to move fast.

Tommy drew a map of the palace just like he told them he would. It was a messy thing, with wobbly lines and faded marks that Tommy had struggled to erase, but it was still a map. During their meeting when Tommy brought the map, he led them through the entire thing with a surprising amount of detail.

It had been two weeks since that happened. Now the group met every few nights to go over the map together as they solidified their plan into something that was actually doable. They were figuring out exactly what supplies they would need, how long each part would take, what the backup plans were if something went wrong—Niki was making sure they spared no detail, which eased a lot of Ranboo's anxiety.

Now they were onto the part of the plan that included gathering supplies. One of the most important things they needed for the job were potions. Of course the standard ones like healing and strength were helpful, but what the group needed more than anything else were specialty potions. Specifically, invisibility potions. Those were to serve as their worst case scenario plan. If all else failed and they were going to get caught, they needed to have as many invis pots as possible so they could use them to escape the palace.

Which was how Ranboo had ended up on the roof of a potion brewery in the middle of the night, keeping watch while Tubbo and Tommy worked together to unlock the trapdoor that

led into the shop itself.

Tubbo had been the one to suggest that the three of them pull their own job. Tommy had been stopping by the bakery a lot during the day now, and while sometimes their time together was used to talk about the plan, more often than not they all just... hung out. To Ranboo's surprise, Tommy meshed with both him and Tubbo extremely well. He could encourage Tubbo's more chaotic ideas, while also bouncing off of Ranboo's deadpan humor with wit sharp enough to cut. It was rare that one of their hangouts didn't end with Ranboo's stomach being sore from laughing so hard.

So it was only natural that when they realized they were going to have to steal some potions, it was going to be the three of them as a group that did it. Niki, Fundy, and Jack were all busy trying to balance their day jobs with planning the heist, so the trio had decided to use their ample free time to get the supplies for the others.

Tubbo had picked out the brewery they were going to rob. It was a few streets over from the bakery, so the trio would be able to run and hide there if things went wrong. The shop itself was very nice, the type of brewery that catered to the upper classes by bragging about their 'organic' potion ingredients and things of that sort. Unsurprisingly, this also meant it was locked up tighter than a lower-end potion brewery would be.

Hence, why Tommy and Tubbo were both struggling to get the lock on the trapdoor undone.

"How much longer do you think it's going to take you guys?" Ranboo whispered, anxiously glancing back at his two friends.

"Hey! Don't rush the process unless you wanna come over here and unlock this shit yourself!" Tommy whisper-shouted back at him with a frown.

"This thing is fucking impossible to lockpick," Tubbo explained, pushing his hair out of his eyes for a moment to get a closer look at the lock. "I'm thinking we might need to go with plan B."

Ranboo's eyes widened. "Plan B? That's going to make so much noise though! We'll get caught for sure!"

Tubbo shrugged. "Do you see anyone around the street who might hear it?"

Biting his lip, Ranboo glanced back to the street. He scanned the walkways, searching for any sign of movement. There was a homeless person slumped against the wall of a carpenter's shop, but they seemed sound asleep. Besides them, the street looked empty.

"Well, no, but-"

"Then we're going with plan B," Tubbo declared, turning around to reach into his bag.

"Tommy, drop the lock and move back over by Ranboo."

"What's your plan B?" Tommy asked as he pulled his pin out of the lock, scooting away from the trapdoor and towards the edge of the roof where Ranboo was settled.

A wild grin spread across Tubbo's face. Slowly, he pulled his hand out of his bag, and gripped in his fingers was a small wrapped package. Tubbo moved with the kind of caution that one would move with when holding a bomb, which Ranboo knew was exactly what he was holding so it made a lot of sense.

He settled the package right on top of the trapdoor, right beside the lock. Tommy still seemed confused, and frowned when Ranboo pushed him further back with his arm.

"Once this goes off, get ready to move *fast*, got it?" Tubbo instructed, giving Ranboo and Tommy an uncharacteristically serious look.

"Got it," Ranboo nodded.

"Wait, what the fuck is that? What's going to happen?" Tommy questioned, struggling to push Ranboo's arm away from him.

Once again, Tubbo grinned. "You'll see."

Before Tommy could open his mouth to ask what the hell that meant, Tubbo pulled a lighter from his pocket. There was a brief spark, and suddenly Tubbo was covering his head and rolling to the opposite side of the roof. Ranboo grabbed Tommy and spun him so he was facing away from the bomb, and tried to shield the smaller boy's back with his own.

He squeezed his eyes shut. Then, there was an ear-shattering pop followed by a blast of heat against his back.

After counting a few beats in his head, Ranboo dropped his arms from Tommy's shoulders. Tommy whirled around and Ranboo did the same, and Tommy gasped at the scene in front of them.

The trapdoor... wasn't even really a trapdoor anymore. All that was left of it were black scorch marks against the roof. A few pieces of splintered wood were scattered around, and the acrid scent of smoke overwhelmed Ranboo's senses.

The most important thing though was that where the trapdoor had been, there was now just an open hole leading directly into the brewery.

"Holy SHIT!" Tommy exclaimed, scrambling over to the former trapdoor. "Tubbo, you didn't tell me you had bombs!"

Tubbo, who had straightened up and was rushing back over to the door, tightened the strap of his satchel and laughed. "It's my specialty. If you ever need to blow something up, I'm your guy."

"He's had... a lot of practice," Ranboo muttered, flashing back to the dozens of test bombs Tubbo had detonated in the middle of the forest.

"Well that's pretty damn useful," Tommy said, looking down the hole. "Now, who's gonna go first?"

The three exchanged awkward glances, none of them wanting to be the one that climbed down the ladder into the shop first. It was completely dark in the shop from what Ranboo could see, and although he had the advantage of having better night vision than Tommy and Tubbo, that didn't mean he was eager to climb into a shop that, for all they knew, could be rigged with redstone traps.

"Ranboo, I think you should go," Tubbo suddenly said.

"Huh? Why me?" Ranboo asked, struggling to keep the waver out of his voice.

"Because if an alarm goes off or something you can just teleport back up here. It'd be faster than me or Tommy having to climb back up," Tubbo explained. "Besides, you see better in the dark anyway."

Ranboo groaned. "You know I'm not good at teleporting. I could mess up!"

Tubbo folded his arms over his chest. "Ranboo."

"Tubbo," Ranboo replied, meeting the curtain of hair that hid Tubbo's eyes from view with a flat stare.

There was a beat of silence. Tommy looked between the two awkwardly, as if he wasn't sure if he could speak or not. Tubbo really wasn't going to let this go, was he?

Ranboo knew Tubbo was right. It was safest for him to go down first. What if something did happen? It would take way longer for the two of them to climb out compared to Ranboo just teleporting out. Even if he missed his goal like he so often did, it would still get him closer to getting out compared to just climbing up the ladder.

After a moment, Ranboo sighed.

"Fine."

"Great!" Tubbo gestured to the hole in the roof, with a ladder stretching below. "Watch out for any tripwire."

"And yell to us if it's safe," Tommy added.

"Will do," Ranboo grumbled as he carefully lowered himself onto the ladder.

Awkwardly, Ranboo started to clamber down the ladder. His hands were shaking, and his ears were still ringing from the explosion that had happened only minutes before. He stepped from rung to rung, eyes darting around as the inside of the shop came into view.

The brewery had two floors. As Ranboo carefully stepped off the ladder, he spotted a set of stairs leading down to the first floor. From what Tommy had told them when he'd done recon on the inside of the brewery during the day, the first floor was largely filled with either standard potions or display potions. The kind of stuff they were looking for—specialty potions—would be found on the second floor.

The room Ranboo found himself in was not large. The floors were made of dark wood paneling, with plain white walls that had a surprising amount of windows which Ranboo guessed was for ventilation. All around him were iron counters with brewing stands sitting on top. Ranboo also noticed a few of the brewing stands had potions brewing in them right at that moment. His eyes caught on the brewing stand nearest to him, which had three bottles nestled underneath it, each one filled with a sparkling orange liquid.

*Fire resistance potions.*

This was exactly where they needed to be. They just had to find where they kept the invisibility potions and they could be on their way.

Ranboo glanced to the floor, searching for any tripwires, and carefully began to walk around the room. The wood creaked under his shoes. Wind whistled outside the windows, the shadows of swaying tree branches dancing across the floor. A sliver of moonlight filtered through one of the windows, bathing the room in a pale glow. If there were any tripwires, he'd be able to see the moonlight reflecting off of them.

After a few moments, he determined there were none.

"It's all clear!" Ranboo whisper-shouted up the ladder.

Tommy and Tubbo quickly scurried down the rungs, dropping down onto the floor with matching *thuds!* As they looked around the room, Ranboo noticed Tommy's eyes caught on the fire resistance potions currently brewing, and reached out a hand to stop him before he could walk over to them.

"We need to be careful when we're taking anything. There could be more security measures we don't know about," Ranboo whispered.

"Of course I know that," Tommy scoffed, tugging his arm away from Ranboo.

Tubbo, meanwhile, was already searching through cabinets and drawers for what they had actually come here for. He frowned into a cabinet full of nether wart, before shaking his head and shutting the doors with a soft click.

Ranboo decided to hang by the ladder while his friends ransacked the floor. If someone had heard the explosion and called the guards, someone needed to listen so they could get out before they surrounded the place.

He watched as Tommy and Tubbo searched through the lab. Tommy carefully eyed the fire resistance potions brewing before pulling himself away, clearly knowing that's not what they were there for. Tubbo picked a lock on a drawer, digging through piles of rare and expensive potion ingredients. Ranboo continuously glanced up to the roof, straining to hear what was going on outside.

Finally, after minutes of searching, Tommy let out a quiet cheer.

"Found them!"

Deep in the back of a small cabinet near one of the brewing stands, Ranboo was able to spot bottles full of silver gleaming liquid. There were eight of them in all, which wasn't as many as any of them would like, but it would have to do the trick.

Ranboo rushed over and opened his bag for Tommy to place the potions in. Tubbo was still digging through the rest of the lab, and Ranboo noticed he was chucking some healing pots into his own bag. Good thinking on his part, Ranboo had forgotten they were supposed to grab those as well.

Right as the last of the invisibility potions were tucked into his bag, the slam of a door echoed from the stairs. All three of them froze as a voice yelled out from the first floor, demanding to know if anyone was inside.

The trio shared wide-eyed looks. Then, they all sprinted for the ladder.

Ranboo didn't waste time trying to climb up. Instead, he focused on the sliver of roof he could see from the bottom of the ladder, and felt his heart skip a beat as he teleported up. When he successfully landed right where he'd aimed, he wanted to celebrate because he was still learning how to do that, but he knew he didn't have time for that. So as he reappeared in a cloud of purple particles, Ranboo immediately turned around to help Tubbo climb the rest of the way up, with Tommy scurrying right behind him.

With all three of them on the roof, they rushed to the edge to look over. Six guards stood outside of the brewery, enchanted armor gleaming as they rested their crossbows on their shoulders.

"Shit!" Tommy hissed, grabbing both Tubbo and Ranboo's wrists and dragging them away from the edge. "How the hell are we supposed to get down from the roof with those fuckers watching us?"

"I don't know! I didn't think they'd call so many guards!" Tubbo replied, eyes darting wildly around the roof for a way down.

Ranboo did the same, looking around for some way they could sneak off the roof without being seen. Of course they could use the invisibility potions they had grabbed, but that would defeat the whole purpose of stealing them. They needed as many as they could for the heist, and couldn't afford to use them right now.

Suddenly, Ranboo's eyes landed on the swath of dark forest that sat behind the potion brewery. The brush was thick, and the shadows made it nearly impossible for people with normal vision to see just about anything. If they managed to get in there and run like hell, it wouldn't take long to lose the guards.

Still, it was far. If they tried to climb down the side of the roof, they would be spotted too quickly and wouldn't make it to the forest in time. Which meant they had to go with the alternate option to get down there.

Ranboo wasn't used to teleporting long distances, let alone with other people. But if there was ever a time to test his abilities, it was now, because even if they didn't make it all the



way at least it would get them closer to their goal.

At least, that was what Ranboo hoped.

“Guys, hold onto me,” Ranboo said, trying to sound more confident about this than he felt.

Tubbo instantly picked up on what he was doing, and didn’t hesitate to loop his arm through Ranboo’s. Tommy however seemed less sure, frowning at Ranboo and opening his mouth to protest.

Before Tommy could get a word out though, the whiz of an arrow flew above their heads, and Ranboo realized the guards had spotted them.

Ranboo grabbed Tommy without thinking, and focused his gaze on one of the looming trees in the distance. There was a pressure in his head, a pounding in his chest, and a buzzing in his fingertips. Then, his stomach dropped, and they were yanked forward.

The potions clattered in Ranboo’s bag as he slammed into the grass on the edge of the forest. Beside him, Tubbo was coughing and stumbling to his feet, while Tommy was trying to swat at the purple particles around his head. In the distance, Ranboo could hear more shouting coming from the guards, but was struggling to catch his breath as his vision swam in front of him.

“No time to breathe, we gotta go!” Tubbo said, grabbing Ranboo’s hand and yanking him to his feet. The three of them sprinted into the forest, Ranboo barely able to see thanks to his dizziness and letting Tubbo be his guide.

Ranboo wasn’t sure how long they ran for. His lungs burned and his stomach was twisting into knots, but he wasn’t sure whether that was from the teleporting or just his fear. Several times Ranboo stumbled over tree roots and large rocks, but every time either Tubbo or Tommy would catch him and help him back up.

Eventually, when Ranboo felt as though he was on the brink of collapse, the sounds of shouting guards faded away. Tubbo and Tommy both slowed, and Ranboo immediately leaned against the nearest tree trunk he could find to try and catch his breath.

The three boys shared a look between their panting breaths. Tommy was the first to grin, quickly followed by Tubbo, and Ranboo couldn’t help but join in. Then, as if on cue, the three of them dissolved into a fit of laughter.

Ranboo wasn’t sure what they were laughing at. It was a strange mix of relief and euphoria, along with the sense of triumph that came with a job well done. There was also probably some exhausted hysteria in there as well, but it didn’t matter. They laughed and laughed and laughed, until their stomachs were sore and Tommy was nearly passed out from lack of oxygen.

They had done it. They had successfully run their own heist.

“That was so fucking cool!” Tommy exclaimed as soon as they were all able to breathe again. “Ranboo, I knew you could teleport but I didn’t know you could go that far with it!”

Ranboo chuckled and shook his head. “I didn’t know either. I just figured it was worth a shot.”

Tubbo patted him on the shoulder, a wide grin stretched across his face. “You did good, bossman. We wouldn’t have gotten out of that without you.”

“It’s good to know I can do that now I guess,” Ranboo said, flushing at the praise. “Though I’d rather not do it unless I have to. I honestly thought I was gonna pass out for a few minutes there.”

“Don’t worry, Ranboob. It’ll just be our ‘in case of emergency’ card,” Tommy reassured, leaning against the tree beside him. “You feeling better now though?”

“Yeah, I’m a lot better now, thanks,” Ranboo said, offering Tommy a grateful smile. “Good job finding the potions by the way. If we had found them any later we would’ve been screwed.”

“Rich bastards like that love to hide the good stuff in the very back. Makes it seem more ‘exclusive’ or whatever when they take a long time trying to find it for customers,” Tommy scoffed, rolling his eyes.

“Well, it’s a good thing you knew that, otherwise we’d be toast!” Tubbo said in way too cheerful of a tone. “So thanks Tommy for deciding to come with us on this heist.”

Tommy rolled his eyes. “Oh c’mon, it wasn’t a big deal. I thought it’d be fun.”

“No, seriously, thank you,” Ranboo cut in, looking over at Tommy. “You didn’t have to come with us. You’re new still and we wouldn’t have forced you. But you still took the risk and helped us out.”

At this, Tommy’s wry grin faded. “I mean... you guys don’t need to get all mushy and shit. I was happy to do it.”

“Sorry, sometimes I get mushy after near death experiences,” Ranboo joked, nudging Tommy in the arm.

“He does, I can totally confirm that,” Tubbo agreed, punching Ranboo’s shoulder. “Mushy or not though, I’m really glad you decided to join our crew, Tommy.”

“Me too,” Ranboo echoed.

It was true. Tommy joining was one of the best things to happen to their group in recent times. Not only was he a great help for jobs, but he was also just a really fun person to be around. Every time he started bantering with Tubbo, or started joking around with Jack, or teased Ranboo, it made Ranboo feel like Tommy had been meant to be part of their group all along. He fit in so well, it was hard to believe he hadn’t been there the whole time.

Tommy flushed and ducked his eyes to the ground. “Thanks guys,” he muttered, looking a bit embarrassed. “I’m pretty glad I joined too.”

A moment of silence fell over the group. Ranboo readjusted the bag on his shoulder, Tubbo shoved his hands in his pockets, and Tommy kept his head low even though Ranboo could see the faint flush on his cheeks.

Then, a beat passed, and Tubbo clapped his hands together. “Alright, let’s head out before the guards decide to try and search the forest.”

Straightening up, Tommy shot a grin at both Tubbo and Ranboo. “Sounds good to me.”

In the end, the trio wasn’t caught for the heist of the brewery, although there were wanted posters up urging citizens to report any suspicious looking people that were hanging around the potion shop. However, there were no descriptions of what they looked like. All the guards knew was that there were three of them, and nothing more. Meaning they had gotten away with it.

The next night, Tubbo called their entire thief group to Earl’s pub so they could announce the success of their job. They met up at the pub near midnight, with Tommy being the last to arrive as usual.

The group was seated at their normal table near the stairs. Jack had already ordered the adults a round of beer, while Ranboo and Tubbo were both sipping at juice. When Tommy arrived he tried to ask for a beer, but Jack had laughed in his face and yelled for Earl to bring them another apple juice.

Now with the group all gathered together, Tubbo held his hands up to get everyone’s attention.

“So, we didn’t tell anyone else about this, but me, Tommy, and Ranboo actually pulled a job last night,” Tubbo announced, grinning at the group.

“You did what?!” The three older figures all yelled out in unison.

Jack was scowling at the trio, looking like he had already heard bad news and was ready to scold them for it. In contrast, Fundy seemed to be impressed, grinning and nodding his head like a proud older brother. Niki, meanwhile, seemed to be stuck somewhere between the two. She was frowning, but it wasn’t an angry frown. Ranboo’s chest tightened when he realized she looked *worried*.

“Nothing happened, I swear,” Ranboo suddenly said, hoping to erase the worry from Niki’s face. “It went fine and we didn’t get caught.”

“It went better than fine. It was fucking great,” Tommy chuckled, leaning back to take a swig of his juice.

“That’s great to know, but why the hell did you do this without telling any of us?” Jack asked, his scowl having softened to a frown.

“You guys are already dealing with your own shit, and I knew we could handle this on our own,” Tubbo explained with a shrug.

Sighing, Niki pinched her nose bridge. “And I’m guessing this was your idea, Tubbo?”

“Sure was!” Tubbo chirped, grinning at her.

“Of course it was,” she muttered, shaking her head. “I’m glad you didn’t get caught, but please don’t do that again without consulting us first.”

Tubbo opened his mouth to argue, but Ranboo slapped a hand over his mouth before he could speak.

“Yup, we’ll make sure to do that, Niki,” Ranboo agreed, grinning at his sister.

Niki rolled her eyes at Ranboo, but her frown completely faded and she relaxed her shoulders once again. Jack, noticing how Niki had accepted the conditions, sighed and nodded as well.

“So are you guys gonna tell us what you got?” Fundy then asked with bright eyes, noticing how the scolding part seemed to have passed.

It was here when Tubbo’s terrifying smirk returned. Reaching under the table, he pulled out a bag stuffed with clinking glass bottles, and carefully set it in front of the three people across from them. Lifting the top of the stachel, a potion bottle filled with shimmering silver liquid tumbled out, rolling straight towards Niki’s drink.

Niki, Jack, and Fundy’s eyes all widened at the sight of the invisibility potion. As soon as they realized what it was, Jack quickly snatched it away from Niki and shoved it back into the bag, closing the top so no more bottles could roll out.

“You guys are the ones who robbed that brewery last night?!” Jack whisper-shouted across the table, glancing around the pub to make sure no one was listening in.

“Damn right we were,” Tommy smirked, nudging Tubbo with his elbow. “Tubbo was the mad genius behind the whole thing. Even used a bomb to get us in through the roof.”

“How did you guys not get caught?” Fundy asked, giving the trio a shocked—but delighted—smile.

“We were fast,” Tubbo shrugged. “Blew the trapdoor, got the stuff, and Ranboo teleported us out and down to the forest.”

“You teleported them out?” Niki then questioned, raising her eyebrows at Ranboo.

Ranboo shrunk under her gaze, remembering how they had talked about testing his teleportation abilities and he had always been wary about pushing the limits. “Um, yeah, it was kind of a desperate situation and I didn’t even know if I could do it but then I did and it worked? So that was cool, I think?”

“That’s amazing!” Niki exclaimed, beaming at him. “I knew you were getting better at it. You just need to practice more.”

Ranboo ducked his eyes to his lap, deciding not to mention how he’d almost passed out afterwards. Like Tommy had said, it could be their ‘in case of emergency’ card.

“Anyway, we got as many invis pots as we could for the job,” Tommy cut back in, leaning across the table to point at the satchel. “We also got a few healing pots as well, so hopefully that should be enough so we don’t have to worry about gathering any more.”

“From what it sounds like, I think we have enough,” Niki said, running her hand over the bag. “This is really helpful, so thank you guys. But please, don’t do it again.”

“Don’t worry, we won’t,” Ranboo reassured her.

Grabbing the bag, Tubbo slid it back under the table and away from prying eyes. Now with the announcement out of the way, the table was much more relaxed. Everyone took a few more sips of their drinks, and Jack stopped glancing around every few seconds to make sure no one was listening in on their conversation.

“So, uh, Tommy,” Fundy spoke up after a moment, “how’re things at the palace? I’d imagine things are a bit hectic since it’s getting close to the festival and all.”

Tommy paled a bit at being put on the spot. “Uh, things are alright, but definitely a bit crazy.” He frowned a bit, clearly trying to work out an answer in his head, before glancing back up to meet the other’s eyes. “Lots of work is going into prepping the ballroom and all that, while the royals themselves are a bit more preoccupied with getting their alliance discussions finished before the ball happens.”

“Alliance discussions? Is there a problem with Essempee’s alliances?” Jack asked, frowning at him.

“Uh, shit, maybe I shouldn’t have said that,” Tommy muttered.

“You don’t have to tell us anything that could get you in trouble,” Ranboo reassured him, placing a hand on Tommy’s arm.

Tommy flashed him a grateful smile. “Thanks. I don’t think I can tell you guys details about what’s going on, but I can say that the alliances are fine. They’re just working out some new factors, like adding more trade routes and stuff like that. Most of the discussion is about the alliance everyone has with Manberg, since it’s newer and all.”

“I’m surprised you know so much about what’s going on,” Niki commented, raising an eyebrow at Tommy. “I wouldn’t think a servant would be allowed to have access to that kind of information.”

“Oh! Uh, that’s a good point,” Tommy said, laughing nervously. “But, um, you see, Theseus is a bit of a blabbermouth. He tells me *all* about what’s going on in the secret meetings and shit.” Leaning back in his seat, Tommy looked as if he was trying to force himself to relax.

“Besides, everyone in the palace and their mother knows how much of a pain in the ass Schlatt is, so that’s more of an open secret.”

“I had a feeling that any guy who called himself an Emperor had to be a bit of a dick,” Fundy commented.

“He is! Most people don’t realize it, but he’s also a raging alcoholic. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him completely sober,” Tommy told them, his voice dropping to a whisper. “The other monarchs, like Phil, Dream, and Eret, they don’t like him. Not to mention he’s a dick to the servants.”

Huh. Ranboo barely knew anything about Emperor Schlatt when Quackity had first mentioned that he was who they were going to be robbing. The extent of his knowledge began and ended with the fact that he was the leader of Manberg. And although Ranboo hadn’t exactly felt guilty about their plan before, hearing that Schlatt was apparently a terrible person made Ranboo significantly more eager to go through with the job.

“Good thing we’re robbing him, wouldn’t you say?” Jack then said with a smirk.

“Wait, I’m curious about the other royals now,” Tubbo suddenly cut in. “You already told me and Ranboo about the Empire royals, but what about the others? Like King Dream and his court, or Monarch Eret?”

“I mean, you live here, don’t you already know enough about Dream?” Tommy asked, frowning at the group.

“King Dream is a rather... private figure,” Niki explained softly. “That’s how all the leaders of Essempee are. All the Kings and Queens are meant to appear only as sovereigns to us, serving the will of the people rather than their own personal ideas. We aren’t meant to know what they’re like as individuals, hence why we never see their faces.”

Tommy nodded at that, still frowning as he ran his finger along the edge of his juice glass. “That’s what I was told, but I figured you guys at least knew a little about him as a person. Like, do you seriously not know anything about him except for what he does as king?”

“Not really,” Fundy shrugged. “We know he’s young, and that’s about it. The only way for us to infer what he’s like is through his actions.”

“Which reflects pretty favorably on him right now,” Niki cut back in. “One of his first actions as King was to impose higher taxes on the nobles and redistribute the money back to the lower classes.”

“Still didn’t tax them enough in my opinion,” Jack grumbled, folding his arms over his chest. “Bastards have way too much useless shit in their house.”

“And that’s why we steal it!” Tubbo then chimed in with a grin.

Ranboo stayed quiet, not paying enough attention to the politics going on in the kingdom to really form a solid opinion.

“That’s so weird to me that you guys don’t even know your own king,” Tommy said, shaking his head. “In the Empire, you’ve either spoken to Philza personally, or you know someone who has. There’s a huge market right outside the palace gates that he visits every weekend, and takes time to talk to the different shopkeepers and people there to get their opinions on what they want and how things are going. Wilbur does the same thing too.”

“That sounds strange,” Ranboo muttered, frowning as he tried to imagine King Dream walking down the street.

“King Philza sounds like a really cool guy,” Tubbo commented, slumping against Ranboo’s shoulder.

At this, Tommy grinned. “Yeah, he’s a real good one.” He stared at the table for a beat, as if he was thinking fondly of a memory, and then shook himself off. “Anyway, since you guys don’t know, I’ll tell you that Dream is a pretty cool guy I guess? Like, he’s *really* passionate about all that boring negotiation shit, but he’s not super boring himself. He likes to joke around a lot, but is way too much of a simp for his friends.”

“H-He’s a simp?” Fundy asked, nearly choking on his beer.

“Oh god, yeah he is,” Tommy snorted. “Every day his advisor, George, is supposed to sit in on the meetings with him and, y’know, give him advice. But George always either falls asleep or doesn’t pay attention, and Dream never gets upset. I don’t think George has ever done a day of work in his life.”

“Good to know our kingdom is in capable hands,” Jack muttered.

“Aw, lighten up, Jack,” Niki said, nudging his shoulder. “I think it’s nice to hear that our King has a soft spot for his friends.”

Jack let out a noncommittal hum in response, but Ranboo could see the small smile he was hiding in his drink.

“What about the Monarch Eret?” Niki then asked. “I know we’ve been allied with Angia for nearly as long as we’ve been allied with the Empire, but I don’t know anything about the kingdom or what Eret is like.”

“Eret?” Tommy questioned, raising his eyebrows. “I think Eret is a pretty solid person. They’re really nice, and will listen to Prince Theseus whenever he wants to ramble about something random. Their advisor, Foolish, is a *really* funny guy. He and Theseus once stole a bunch of pickles from the kitchen and tried to have a pickle eating competition, but they ended up dropping the jar off a balcony by accident.”

Ranboo blinked at the story. “Eret’s advisor... had a pickle eating contest... with Prince Theseus,” he said slowly, trying to make sure he was understanding the story.

“Yup. Sure did.”

The table was silent for a moment, the group wondering what the hell to think about that.

“What the fuck goes on inside that palace?” Fundy muttered under his breath.

“A lot, according to Tommy,” Tubbo laughed, elbowing Tommy in the side. “Personally though, I think Tommy is the best thing to come out of that palace.”

Red bloomed across Tommy’s cheeks, and he quickly ducked his head. “Shut up.”

“No, I’m serious! We wouldn’t have gotten nearly this far without you! C’mon, tell him, guys!”

“He’s got a point,” Jack agreed, looking more relaxed now that the subject had moved off politics. “You’ve been a pretty great addition to the team.”

“Yeah, your map is super helpful for our planning,” Fundy chimed in. “And you know so much about the inner workings of the palace and the royals. You must pay super close attention to what goes on in there.”

Tommy seemed reluctant to accept the praise, so Ranboo nudged him slightly with his shoulder to get him to look up.

“Seriously Tommy, you’re a great guy,” Ranboo encouraged. “I know I’m gonna be really sad when you have to leave when this is all over.”

At the reminder of Tommy’s inevitable departure from Essempee, everyone’s faces fell. Ranboo instantly regretted bringing it up, especially when he saw the dark look that had cast itself over Tommy’s expression.

“He’s right,” Niki said softly. “We’re going to miss you when this is all over.”

“You guys have a lot of doubts if you think I’m not gonna make sure Tommy gets fired before the end of this so he doesn’t have to leave,” Tubbo joked, linking his arm with Tommy’s.

The rest of the table burst into laughter, knowing that Tubbo wouldn’t hesitate to actually do something like that. Of course they knew their time with Tommy was limited, even if the heist went perfectly he was still going to have to return to the Empire at the end of it. Despite the fact that they’d only known Tommy for a few weeks, Ranboo was already dreading seeing him go. He had slotted himself in so perfectly, Ranboo already knew that when he left, there was going to be a Tommy-sized hole left in their group.

Apparently, Tommy was thinking the same thing. When Ranboo caught his eye again as the others laughed at Tubbo’s joke, he noticed that Tommy wasn’t joining in. In fact, he didn’t even seem happy. Instead, his eyes were dull as he stared at the wall behind Niki’s head, his lips set in a thin line.

The others didn’t seem to notice, and Ranboo didn’t want to call it out. Instead, he just set a hand on Tommy’s shoulder, and when Tommy met his gaze, Ranboo gave him a reassuring nod.

The small smile he got in return was grateful, but still terribly sad.



## Chapter End Notes

Tommy's starting to feel some guilt maybe... ;)

so this chapter again didn't have much except in terms of relationship building, I hope that's ok! I just really wanted to show how close Tommy is getting with the group as they inch closer and closer to the ball

also I wanted bench trio to pull their own heist. i just thought it would be funny

anyway I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter, pls let me know what you thought down in the comments! they make my day <3

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# advice

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur goes to Tommy for advice, and something unexpected happens

## Chapter Notes

HEY GUYS LONG TIME NO SEE

so sorry for how long it's taken me to get this chapter up, I started planning and writing a new fic that I plan on publishing only after I've completely pre-written it, and I've already gotten over 50k words of that done so hopefully I'll be able to wrap that up soon. however, have this in the meantime!

thank you all so much for the love and support you've given this so far! this is a slightly shorter chapter than usual, but I don't think it will be disappointing

have fun ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was less than two weeks until the ball, and Tommy was starting to wonder if he was making a huge mistake.

His double life was harder to maintain than he thought it would be. Not in the sense that he was afraid of being discovered, but because of the guilt gnawing away at his insides. He hated lying to his friends. Tubbo, Ranboo, Jack, Fundy, and Niki all trusted him completely now, they believed what he told them about the palace and about his life, and they all *cared* for him.

Living on the streets, Tommy had never been the type to make friends. His voice was too loud, his words too sharp. People saw him as an annoying pest, something to squash under their boots as they passed by. Even fellow street urchins avoided him, not wanting to be associated with the attention he had always drawn to himself.

Now of course, he had his family. People that he knew loved him not in spite of the fact that he was loud and annoying, but because of it. But while he loved his family just as much, he still didn't have *friends*. Not until he had met the thieves.

But he knew the truth. The friendship that they all thought they had with him—it wasn't real. It was built on lies. And keeping up the facade, laughing with Tubbo and smiling at Ranboo all while knowing he was lying to them just by being friends with them... it was really hard to deal with.

So maybe that's why Tommy was curled up in his room by himself, stewing in his thoughts while the late afternoon sun blazed outside his window. Usually he spent his days out of the palace, hanging out with Tubbo and Ranboo at Niki's bakery. But he couldn't bring himself to keep up the act today, so he stayed inside.

His self-isolation was cut short by a knock at his door.

"What do you want?" Tommy called from his bed, not bothering to get up to open the damn thing.

"Toms? Are you busy right now?" It was Wilbur. While a part of Tommy wanted to groan knowing his older brother wanted something from him, he also hadn't gotten the chance to spend much time with Wilbur over the past few weeks. Between Wilbur's duties as Crown Prince and Tommy's work with the thieves, their schedules just didn't line up as smoothly as before.

Although he didn't want to admit it, Tommy missed his brother.

"No, I'm not," Tommy replied, still sitting back against his pillows.

"Then can I come in? I just wanna get some advice for something."

Tommy frowned. Wilbur wanted advice? From *him*? That was a new one.

"Uh, sure!"

The door creaked open, and Wilbur poked his head into the room. He spotted Tommy curled up against his pillows and made his way over to the bed, making sure to shut the door to the room behind him before settling himself on the edge of the comforter.

"I'll be honest, I wasn't expecting you to be in here," Wilbur said as soon as he sat down.

Tommy frowned. "Why not?"

"Because you always seem to be out doing something these days," Wilbur told him. "Sam told me you've been going into town a lot recently. Is that true?"

"I mean, yeah, I've been exploring a lot," Tommy shrugged, hoping he sounded casual about it. "Got Big Man shit to do, y'know?" Usually Tommy employing the 'Big Man' phrase was a surefire way to earn an eye roll and a huff of laughter from his brother. But something in his voice must've fallen flat, because Wilbur's brows only furrowed.

"Are you sure you're alright?" Wilbur asked, leaning over. "Because you seem a bit off."

“Aw c’mon, Wil, you know Big Man Tommy! I’m always on my A game!” Tommy declared, forcing himself to put as much energy into his voice as possible. Wilbur still seemed doubtful, so he quickly added, “I’m just a bit tired today. Walked a fuck ton yesterday so my feet are sore as shit.”

That wasn’t exactly a lie. The night before he had walked across more than a mile’s worth of rooftops with Tubbo and Ranboo at his side. They had claimed they were on the lookout for more places to steal from to get supplies, like the potion brewery, but they didn’t do a lot of searching and instead just joked around with each other. It had been a fun time, but all that walking on slanted tiles really did a number on your feet.

Wilbur nodded at this, the furrow in his brow disappearing as he accepted the lie. “I reckon you know this kingdom better than Dream at this point,” he joked.

Tommy snorted. “Probably, especially considering Dream almost never leaves this fucking palace.”

“I wouldn’t say that. I’ve heard rumors that Dream does actually leave the palace every once in a blue moon. No one just ever knows it’s him because he takes his mask off when he goes out,” Wilbur told him in a hushed voice.

“Where did you hear that?” Tommy asked, his eyes wide.

“I’m not revealing my sources,” Wilbur shot back, smirking at him. “Anyway, it could all just be a rumor. But I’d think there’s quite an advantage to getting to know the citizens you rule when they don’t know your face.”

“Sounds fuckin’ creepy,” Tommy snorted. “Why? You thinking of wearing a mask and going around asking people in the Empire what they think of Phil? Is that the advice you wanted from me?”

Rolling his eyes, Wilbur leaned his hands further back on the bed so he was half-laying down. “No, I’m not going to wear a mask and walk around the Empire asking people what they think of Phil. What I actually need your advice on involves more alliance discussion,” Wilbur explained.

Curling his legs up underneath himself so Wilbur could stretch completely across the bed, Tommy frowned. “Why do you want my advice for that? You know I don’t know shit about politics.”

“You don’t need to know about politics for this. Up until a year ago, you were just another citizen of the Empire, Tommy. I need that point of view. Not one of a King or a royal advisor, but someone who knows what it’s like to actually live in our kingdom as a normal person.”

Tommy blinked. “Um... I guess I can do that?”

“Don’t worry, Toms. It’s not a test or anything,” Wilbur reassured, rolling over onto his stomach so he could face Tommy. He paused for a moment, fiddling with one of the brown

curls that fell over his face, and Tommy recognized it as the face Wilbur made when he was trying to figure out how to word something.

“Tommy, do you know what a draft is?”

“Um, that’s when you get called to fight in the military, right?” Tommy asked, having heard the term thrown around a few times before.

Wilbur nodded. “Exactly. It’s mandatory service. If a country is at war, they can put a draft into effect to force citizens to join the military to fight.”

Oh... Tommy wasn’t sure he liked where this conversation was going.

“Do, uh, do we have that?”

“We’re not at war, so no we don’t. But if war breaks out and we don’t have a large enough military force, we’d have to start a draft,” Wilbur explained, propping his chin on his hands.

“We-We’re not going to have a war anytime soon, right?” Tommy asked, his voice small.

Wilbur’s relaxed expression immediately turned to worry, and he sat upright to scoot next to Tommy. “Oh no! That’s not what I meant at all,” he said in a rush, squeezing Tommy’s shoulder reassuringly. “Sorry, shit, I should’ve clarified. This is entirely hypothetical. We’ve been at peace for hundreds of years now. No one is planning on starting any wars anytime soon.”

Shoulder sagging in relief, Tommy nodded. “Jesus christ, you scared me, asshole.”

Wilbur chuckled and moved to wrap his arm around Tommy’s shoulders. “I’m sorry, I should’ve been more clear. We’re trying to figure out a policy in the alliance for how drafts work in all of our kingdoms. So I guess my question to you is this: say Essempee declares war on... some other country far away from here. Because we are allied with Essempee, the Empire would send in some forces to help Essempee in their war. However, if a situation came up where the Empire’s additional forces weren’t enough, should we impose a draft to help our allied kingdom or not?”

Tommy frowned, trying to wrap his head around the situation Wilbur was proposing. “So... if Essempee were at war, should we force our own citizens to go help fight for Essempee?”

“Pretty much. It would also work the same in reverse. If the Empire declared war on another country, Essempee would impose a draft to send their citizens to help us as well.”

Clenching his jaw, Tommy tried to think over what Wilbur was asking. He didn’t like the idea of a draft in the first place. The idea of forcing anyone to join the military sounded horrible to him, but Wilbur said it as if it were such a normal thing, that Tommy figured it was something that had been done plenty of times before. In a way, he supposed he could understand being called on to protect the place you lived in, but to do it for another country that wasn’t even your own? It left a bad taste in his mouth.

“I mean, I don’t like that idea, if that’s what you’re asking,” Tommy admitted, looking at his hands. “I don’t think that’s fair to make our people go fight for another kingdom. If Essempee gets themselves into that deep of shit then that’s their problem.”

“But you’d have to remember it would work the same way in reverse. If the Empire was in big trouble like that, Essempee could just say, ‘sorry you shouldn’t have gotten into shit like that’. Which is totally fine if that’s what you think, but I just want to make sure you’re thinking about it both ways,” Wilbur explained.

“Well... couldn’t we just let people volunteer if they wanted to go help our allies?” Tommy asked, glancing up at Wilbur. “Like, say Essempee is at war and they really need help. Why can’t we just straight up tell the people in the Empire, ‘hey our ally really needs help, are any of you willing to go fight for them?’ or something like that.”

“But do you really think people would actually volunteer for that?” Wilbur questioned.

“I think if you explained how much Essempee has helped us in the past and all that stuff, then yeah, I think you would get volunteers.”

The streets may have been a rough place to grow up in, but despite seeing arguably one of the worst parts of his kingdom, even then he knew people were often kinder than you thought. The homeless would share the little they had with one another without any expectation for returning the favor. Street vendors would give away free loaves of bread to thin children. A woman Tommy had never met before once gave him a very expensive jacket when she saw him shivering on the street in winter, telling him it used to be her son’s that he had grown out of and that he looked like he could use it.

“You gotta give people a chance to be selfless before assuming they won’t be,” Tommy added after a moment.

Wilbur nodded, brows furrowed in thought as he mulled over Tommy’s words. “Once again I’m just sitting here wondering when the hell my little brother got so wise?”

“And I’m reminding you again, I’m the smartest and wisest man *ever*, so take note,” Tommy teased, smirking at Wilbur.

Huffing, Wilbur flicked Tommy’s forehead, and Tommy yelped in surprise. “What was that for?!”

“No reason,” Wilbur grinned, falling back into Tommy’s pillow pile. “Anyway, thanks for the advice. That actually helps a lot.”

“No problem. Everyone knows my opinions are the Best Opinions,” Tommy said, smiling back at him. There was a beat between them as Tommy thought back to the idea of a draft. Wilbur had made it sound like such a casual thing. “Have we, uh, had a draft before?”

“Well, not in either of our lifetimes no, but I know there’s a policy for a draft already in place,” Wilbur said, sinking further into the pillows. “The last time we were at war was during the Great War, which was three hundred years ago. There was probably a draft then.”

“What was the Great War about anyway? I know the reason we’re here is because it’s like, the anniversary of it or something, but I dunno what it is,” Tommy asked, frowning at his brother.

Wilbur gave him a confused look for a moment, before understanding suddenly dawned on his face. “Shit, I always forget you never actually went to school. If you had been enrolled as a kid you would’ve learned about it in your history class.”

Tommy scoffed. “Sounds boring as hell. I was way too important for all that stupid school stuff.”

“Still, it’s good to know your kingdom’s history, especially as a prince,” Wilbur pointed out. “Anyway, the Great War was what led to our alliance with Essempee. Three hundred years ago the Empire wasn’t exactly the Empire yet. We were a much smaller nation, and we were always having territory skirmishes with Essempee. Essempee was actually much bigger than it is now, as Angia wasn’t an independent country yet and was still a part of Essempee’s territory. You’d think that a country as big as that would be able to run the tiny Antarctic territories into the ground, but we held our own.

“The actual Great War happened when a third party joined the mix. Raiders came from across the sea, wanting to take over the entire continent. The raiders were powerful and wielded strange magic that hadn’t been seen before, so neither the Antarctic or Essempee could fight them off individually. The two countries formed a temporary alliance to fight them together. It was a very bloody and difficult war with a lot of casualties on both sides, but eventually the raiders retreated. After that, Essempee recognized the Antarctic as its own country and they fleshed out an actual alliance with one another.”

A team up then. That’s what led to the alliance that still holds three hundred years later.

“What about Angia? You said it used to be part of Essempee’s territory, right?” Tommy then asked.

“Well, what would become Angia was technically a part of both Essempee *and* the Empire. It was more of its own secluded farming community that had been mostly left alone during the war, and after the Great War ended, they saw an opportunity to take advantage of the fact that both Essempee and the Empire were weakened in order to ask for independence. With Angia, there was no fighting, just negotiations. The rulers of both the Empire and Essempee understood that their countries were in no position to fight again so soon. So they both willingly let Angia declare independence and added the country to the alliance agreement.”

“So we just... let them go?” Tommy asked.

Wilbur nodded. “We did. I know what you’re thinking, Tommy. You think that as the ruler of a country, you need to be the winner all the time, or else you’re doing your job wrong. But that’s not true. If you’re to be a good ruler, you need to know when to choose your battles. Sometimes, it’s okay to lose. You need to be able to recognize when it’s okay to admit defeat if it means a better outcome for your citizens.”

*It's okay to lose.* The words echoed through Tommy's head. Wilbur was right. He had thought that being the king meant you had to win every single time. You have to make your decisions and stick with them. You have to try and win no matter what.

What was winning for Tommy? Right now, it would be successfully keeping his identity as Prince Theseus hidden from the thieves so he could help them complete the heist. Winning would mean getting to keep his friends.

Winning would mean continuing to lie to them.

Wilbur got called off to another meeting not long after that conversation. Alone in his room, Tommy mulled over his options with the heist.

There was a lot that could go wrong, and the consequences varied from destroying Tommy's social life, to possibly ruining his country's entire political alliance. He couldn't stop thinking about the idea of knowing when to lose. Was it time for Tommy to lose? If he got found out now by the other thieves, if they discovered he was Prince Theseus and kicked him out, then he wouldn't be on the line if they got caught during the heist. The Empire would be safe from any fallout.

But at the same time, how shitty was that? Just abandoning his friends to get caught? That wasn't fair at all. He knew the palace better than any of them ever could. This was an insanely dangerous job, and Tommy knew that being on the team increased their chances of success immensely. If he chickened out now, they would almost definitely get caught.

What was more important? Saving face for his kingdom? Or helping his friends?

He forced himself to think of the absolute worst case scenario—he gets caught helping the thieves steal from Schlatt. What would happen then? Maybe it could be brushed off as him being an idiotic rebellious teenager. But at the same time, he was the prince of the Empire. Schlatt had a hair-trigger temper, and Tommy wouldn't put it past him to think of Tommy's involvement as a full on declaration of war.

But that was only if they got caught.

The other really bad scenario was what would happen if his friends got caught but Tommy wasn't involved. He could imagine watching from the side as the group was taken to the prison by Sam. He could imagine keeping his head down, trying to ignore the twisting in his gut as his friends gave him betrayed stares. He could imagine how hard it would be to keep his face neutral, pretending he didn't know these people at all.

He could imagine it. It would be hell.

This was the internal battle that Tommy dealt with for the next few days. He constantly turned his options over and over in his head, trying to figure out what he should do next. Every time he hung out with Tubbo and Ranboo, guilt would continue to gnaw away at his insides. At night he would wander the halls of the palace, feeling the eyes of the past royals watching him, judging him for how selfish he was being.



A few days after his conversation with Wilbur, Tommy was hanging out with Tubbo and Ranboo again. The three of them were walking down the street of the town, exploring the different food vendors in the plaza with Tubbo and Ranboo giving him some very conflicting recommendations.

“I’m telling you, you gotta try the blackened rabbit’s foot! It’s so good!” Tubbo was telling him, pointing towards a stall that had copious amounts of smoke surrounding it.

The plaza was busy today. Like most of the times Tommy had walked through it, there were crowds of brightly-dressed people eating all different types of food and drinks. A woman walked by holding a steaming cup of amber liquid that smelled vaguely like flowers, and Tommy wondered where she had gotten that from.

“Rabbit’s foot?” Tommy winced at the idea of eating a *foot* as he thought back to Tubbo’s plea. “I don’t think so.”

“Then what about the cow’s tongue? It’s really good grilled,” Tubbo pushed.

“A cow’s tongue?” Tommy asked in a small voice, thinking about his cow plush toy he’d left back in the Empire, the one he’d named Henry. “I don’t wanna eat a cow’s tongue. I like cows.”

“Then maybe we’ll stay away from meat,” Ranboo quickly jumped in, letting Tommy breathe a sigh of relief. “There’s some chorus fruit over there which is really good, if you wanna try that?”

Tommy followed the direction Ranboo was pointing in to see a few people holding strange, shimmering purple fruits in their hands. He watched as one man took a large bite of the fruit, only for him to immediately disappear and reappear a few feet away.

“Did that just fuckin’ teleport him?” Tommy asked, frowning at the stand.

“Yup! It’s a really rare fruit that’s somehow connected to Endermen, but we’re not sure how. Either way though, it makes you teleport when you eat it. Isn’t that cool?” Ranboo was beaming at Tommy, clearly excited by this Endermen-esque fruit.

“It tastes like shit,” Tubbo then deadpanned from the side. “Super grainy and it’s not even sweet.”

“It’s good!” Ranboo argued. “It’s not sweet but it’s not sour either. It’s a really good kind of savory taste! And it’s really not that grainy, Tubbo’s just exaggerating.”

“I’m not! It tastes like eating a mouthful of sand!”

“You only tried it one time. You probably just got a bad one,” Ranboo pointed out, frowning at Tubbo.

“I’m not trying it again. It was bad enough the first time,” Tubbo shot back. “Maybe if he won’t try any meat we can get him some grilled beetroot?”

“What the fuck? Beetroot is gross as hell,” Tommy said, lips twisting at the mention of the rancid vegetable. “Who even likes beetroot?”

“I do,” Tubbo replied, folding his arms over his chest.

“Well you have shit taste,” Tommy told him.

“Hey!”

The next few minutes were spent with Tommy running around the square yelling about how Tubbo had broken taste buds, while trying to dodge an angry Tubbo as he chased after him. Ranboo didn’t get involved, instead just sitting off to the side with his head in his hands.

Eventually, one of the vendors yelled at them to stop bothering everyone else in the plaza. Tubbo apologized before dragging Tommy and Ranboo away, ignoring Tommy’s protests to let him go.

“It’s your fault we got yelled at,” Tommy snapped, struggling to yank his wrist out of Tubbo’s grasp.

“I didn’t even do anything,” Ranboo muttered, not bothering to try and get Tubbo to let go of him.

“You shouldn’t have insulted beetroots,” Tubbo huffed as he led them away from the plaza. “Anyway, I think that just settles where we should get our lunch at.”

“Where are we gonna go?” Tommy asked.

“Niki’s bakery. Where else?”

Tommy grinned. “Yes! I’ve been craving those mushroom pies!”

“You literally had those two days ago,” Ranboo pointed out, raising an eyebrow at Tommy.

“Yeah, ‘cause they’re fucking good!” Tommy shot back, sticking his tongue out as Tubbo finally let go of his wrist.

Despite the turmoil Tommy was going through internally right now, it was easy to not think about it in moments like these. Joking around with his two best friends, just chatting about normal things like food let him forget that they had no idea who he truly was. It let him forget just for a moment about the horrible mess he’d gotten himself mixed up in.

Their boots tapped against the cobblestone streets, the trio effortlessly weaving their way between the crowds towards the bakery. Tommy knew the route by heart now. He was pretty sure that even if he was blindfolded he could find his way back just using his muscle memory and his sense of smell.

Speaking of smell, Tommy’s mouth began to water when the delicate sugary scent hit his nose. Tubbo and Ranboo seemed to smell it too, because they all picked up the pace, eager to get their delicious lunch from the best baker in the kingdom.

“If there’s only one chocolate croissant left, I’m taking it,” Tubbo declared as they spotted the bakery on the corner.

“You’ll have to fight me for it, bitch!” Tommy shot back, glaring at Tubbo.

Narrowing his eyes, Tubbo stopped in his tracks, causing Tommy and Ranboo to stop too. Tommy frowned at Tubbo for a moment and was about to ask him what was wrong, when Tubbo suddenly lowered his head, and *ran* into Tommy’s stomach with the full force of his short goat horns.

“WHAT THE FUCK?!” Tommy shrieked, jumping backwards from the small goat boy.

“You wanna fight? Because I’ll win!” Tubbo said, grinning maniacally at Tommy.

“You can’t ram me! I’m not a hybrid! That’s not fair!”

“Oh I definitely can still ram you.”

Tommy was sprinting again towards the bakery, already preparing to jump the counter to hide from Tubbo as soon as he got inside. Tubbo was chasing him with his head still down, and Tommy winced at the phantom feeling of the goat horns knocking into his gut.

Ranboo, who decided he didn’t feel like chasing after them, instead just teleported to the front door of the bakery and was waiting there when Tommy arrived. Tommy grinned at Ranboo and opened the door, darting inside with Tubbo hot on his heels.

Tommy was about to dart towards the counter and jump to the other side, but stopped himself when he noticed a customer blocking his way. He skidded to a stop, Tubbo slamming into his back. Usually, this would’ve made Tommy yelp, but he found himself frozen as he took in the customer who was turning around to see who had entered.

Long brown coat, dark brown curls spilling out of a beanie, and warm brown eyes met Tommy’s own as his heart dropped into his stomach.

Wilbur.

Tommy was standing inside Niki’s bakery, Niki standing at the register, with Tubbo and Ranboo behind him. And Wilbur was here.

A bright smile spread across Wilbur’s face when he met Tommy’s eyes, and Tommy’s heart stopped beating.

“Tommy!” Wilbur said, beaming at him. “I didn’t think I’d run into you here!”

Tommy couldn’t breathe. Blood was rushing in his ears, and he could barely feel Tubbo pressed against his back.

“H-Hi Wil,” Tommy squeaked out, sounding as if he was being strangled.

“I’m so glad you’re here, I’ve actually been wanting to take you to this place for a while now,” Wilbur said, walking towards Tommy to sling his arm around his shoulders. Tommy barely reacted as Wilbur led him over to the counter, and although he didn’t glance back, he could feel Tubbo and Ranboo’s eyes boring holes into the back of his head.

Wilbur brought Tommy to the register, where Niki was regarding him with a wary expression.

“Tommy, I’d like you to meet Niki. She’s the one who baked that apple cinnamon cake I brought back that one time!” Wilbur explained, as if Tommy hadn’t heard his entire conversation with Niki from the back room.

Tommy nodded, knowing that if he tried to speak, the words would just get stuck in his throat.

Wilbur, who seemed completely oblivious to the internal nuclear meltdown Tommy was having right now, looked back to Niki.

Tommy knew what was about to happen. There was nothing he could do but watch, frozen with fear as Wilbur said the damning words.

“Niki, this is my little brother, Theseus. But we all call him Tommy for short.”

The shift was immediate.

Behind him, Tommy faintly heard Ranboo gasp and Tubbo make some sort of strangled noise. In front of his face though, Niki’s soft blue eyes turned into shards of ice. Although she did a good job of keeping her expression controlled, Tommy could tell she was clenching her jaw.

“Theseus, huh?” Niki asked, a painfully fake smile spreading over her face. “I take it that means you’re a prince like your brother?”

Tommy wanted to throw up. His head was spinning, his heart was pounding out of his chest, and if Wilbur hadn’t been holding onto him he probably would’ve collapsed on the floor.

Tears burned behind his eyes as he slowly nodded to confirm what Wilbur had said.

It was over.

## Chapter End Notes

btw with the food scene i’m not trying to make fun of other cultures that eat these types of food, I actually have tried cow’s tongue and I think it’s delicious, I was just trying to show tommy’s reaction to unfamiliar food for some humor

anyway yup tommy is screwed nowwww

this was originally gonna be the end of the last chapter BUT i decided I needed to pace it out a bit more, and now here we are ;)

please let me know what you thought in the comments! gotta go drive to the airport now ugh but love you all <3

hmu on my tumblr @bonesandthebees

# consequences

## Chapter Summary

The truth is out

## Chapter Notes

HEY HEY ANOTHER UPDATE

yeah so I wasn't thinking I'd update this so quickly but I managed to finish this chapter super fast so uh here you guys go! I knew you all were eager to find out what happened next after that cliffhanger so I didn't want to keep you waiting too long :)

anyway very glad you all enjoyed the last chapter, all your comments were very fun to read <3

ok enough rambling, hope you guys enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The rest of Tommy's time in the bakery was a blur.

He could only half-listen as Wilbur rambled on about Niki's baked goods, completely missing the way Niki was shooting death glares in Tommy's direction every chance she got. Tubbo and Ranboo left the store at some point as well, and Tommy didn't see them when Wilbur dragged him back outside.

They walked back to the palace with arms full of baked goods. Wilbur just kept going on about Niki's baking skills and how he's been spending time at the bakery to learn what life is like in Essempee etc. etc. Tommy wasn't paying much attention to anything Wilbur was saying, because his mind was in a state of outright war.

All he wanted to do was drop the pastry boxes he was carrying and run back to the bakery, begging Niki for a chance to explain. Or he wanted to sprint down the cobblestone pathways until he found Tubbo and Ranboo, to try and tell them why he lied.

But he couldn't because he had his stupid brother with him. His stupid, totally clueless and overly-thoughtful brother who had no idea how badly he had just fucked Tommy over. While Tommy wanted to be mad, he knew Wilbur had no way of knowing. As far as Wilbur knew,

he was just showing Tommy a really good place to get sweets because he knew Tommy had a sweet tooth.

It didn't take long for them to make it back to the palace. Tommy darted back to his room as soon as he was able to, locking himself inside and shoving a pillow over his face to muffle his frustrated screams. He allowed himself a bit of time to panic about his situation, but then he knew he needed to figure out a plan.

He had to talk to the group as a whole. There was no doubt that even if Niki hadn't had the chance to tell Jack and Fundy yet, she was going to tell them all tonight during their meeting at Quackity's.

If he went to the casino, they very well could just slam the door in his face. But he knew for sure they were going to be there tonight, because they were supposed to meet for another check-in regarding the plan. If he was going to have any chance at maybe salvaging the situation, he needed to explain himself as soon as possible.

He ended up not going down to dinner that night, claiming that he didn't feel that good. There was no way he was going to be able to pretend that everything was fine when it felt like he was standing in the middle of a burning house. His friends hated him, he knew it. There was no way they wouldn't. He lied to them. And they only found out because of a chance encounter with his brother.

Even if he got the chance to explain himself, they were most likely still going to hate his guts. If that was the case, Tommy would just have to accept it. He just knew that he owed it to them to explain why he lied.

The wait was torturous. Tommy practically wore a rut into his carpet because he was pacing so much. He ended up having to endure a few check-ins from his family, just claiming he was tired and had a headache so they wouldn't try to give him medicine. As the sky grew darker though, he knew that it wasn't going to be long before everyone was asleep, and he could get on his way.

He'd never run that fast on the palace roof in his life. Even though he'd been expecting it, there was still a stabbing pain in his chest when he saw there was no one waiting for him at the bottom of the fence.

Tommy sprinted through the trees, using the shortcut he'd learned over time to get to the casino as quickly as he could. Dry leaves crunched under his boots while branches whipped at his cheeks. He was probably gonna have a few scratches on his face when he got there, but it didn't matter. He just needed to get there as fast as he could.

The abandoned house somehow looked even more ominous in the faint moonlight than it usually did. Tommy winced at the way the wood creaked when he stepped through the doorway, and kept his hood up as he crept down the stairs and into the cellar.

As always, Purpled was waiting by the entrance. He narrowed his eyes at Tommy, and for a moment Tommy wondered if he was going to even let him in.

“You’re late. They’re already in there,” Purpled said after a moment, pulling open the door for him.

Tommy breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed that they hadn’t told Purpled about him.

“Yeah, I know, I’ll hurry up,” Tommy replied as he rushed into the casino.

Purpled slammed the door behind him, and Tommy’s shoulders dropped as he was engulfed in the scent of cigarette smoke and liquor. He was in the casino and that alone was half the battle. Now he just needed to see if they were in Quackity’s office.

He hurried down the hall, heart pounding out of his chest as he approached the dark office door. When he stopped in front of it, he listened closely to see if he could hear the others inside. It might’ve been his imagination, but he swore he could hear faint voices on the other end of the door.

Another wave of nausea rolled over him as he brought his fist up to knock. He fucked up, and he had to face the consequences now.

Taking a deep breath to steady himself, he knocked.

The faint voices on the other side of the door instantly went silent. Tommy held his breath as he heard footsteps approach the door, and was convinced they could probably hear his heartbeat on the other side because of how fast it was beating in his chest.

After several anxiety-ridden moments, the door swung open to reveal a frowning Niki.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing here, *Prince Theseus*?” Niki asked before Tommy got a chance to open his mouth. He winced at the way she emphasized his title—her voice was dripping with contempt.

“I-I wanted to explain myself,” he stammered out, his own voice much smaller than he wanted it to be.

“What, so you can lie to us more? Considering you’ve been lying to us this entire time, what makes you think we’d believe any of your excuses now?” Niki then questioned, her expression frighteningly flat.

“I know I lied and that was wrong, and of course you have no reason to believe me now. But please, I just wanted a chance to explain why I lied to you all. You can kick me out after if you want, but I know I owe you guys an explanation,” Tommy told her, struggling to keep his words steady.

Niki narrowed her eyes at him, and Tommy clenched his jaw, preparing to have the door slammed in his face. But before she could speak, another voice piped up from inside the office.

“Let him in, Niki. I wanna hear what he has to say for himself,” Quackity said, not sounding angry but not sounding all too happy either.



Niki stared at Tommy for a moment, clearly not wanting to let him in, but after a beat she relented. Huffing, she pulled the door open all the way and gestured for Tommy to get inside.

Once he was in the room, Niki slammed the door shut behind him. She bumped into his shoulder as she walked back to Quackity's desk, leaning against the edge with her arms folded over her chest.

Glancing around, Tommy shrunk as he realized everyone in the room was staring at him. Jack was next to Niki, their shoulders pressed together as they gave him identical glares. Quackity was lounging against the center table with a cigarette in his hand, giving Tommy a rather unimpressed stare. Fundy was leaning against one of the walls with his ears flat against his head, his own expression completely unreadable.

And lastly, Tommy spotted Tubbo and Ranboo sitting in two chairs on the opposite side of the room from Fundy. Tubbo's lips were set in a thin line, and Tommy couldn't see his eyes behind his hair. Ranboo wasn't looking up at him, instead seeming very focused on his lap as he wrung his hands together.

Tommy's chest ached fiercely. The silence in the room was so thick, it could've been cut with a knife. Everyone in the room was treating him like he was a threat. Which... he was, wasn't he?

Finally, after what seemed like eons of silence but was probably only a few seconds, Quackity spoke again.

"So, you're not a servant for Prince Theseus, I take it?" Quackity asked, taking a drag of his cigarette.

Tommy shook his head. "No. I... I am Prince Theseus."

Another beat of silence.

Then, Jack spoke up.

"Okay, let me be the first to say, what the fuck?" Jack pushed off from the desk to walk in front of Tommy, pushing his red and blue glasses up on his head. "You've been a part of this group for quite a decent chunk of time now, and you didn't think to mention earlier that you're goddamn royalty? What the hell were you even thinking?"

"I-I didn't think that you guys would let me stay in the group if you found out who I was!" Tommy exclaimed. "You were already so suspicious of me when I first joined that I knew you wouldn't trust me if you knew I wasn't a servant, so I just thought it'd be easier to, y'know, keep quiet."

"You're right. We wouldn't have trusted you if we'd known," Niki then joined in. "Because it doesn't make any sense for a *prince* to want to participate in stealing something from someone his kingdom is allied with unless he's setting up a trap. That's what you were doing, right? Trying to trick us into going through with the heist so you could lead us straight to the guards?"

Tommy's eyes widened. "No! That's not what I was doing at all! I wasn't trying to trap you guys or anything, I swear, I'd never do that to any of you!"

"Why did you decide to join a heist then?" Fundy chimed in. "You're not an idiot. You realize the political ramifications it could've had for your country if you'd been caught."

"I didn't- I don't know! I just wasn't thinking! I got so caught up in the excitement of it all that I didn't really start thinking about how bad it could go until recently!" Tommy stammered, knowing his face was growing red as he struggled to explain his side of it.

"You expect us to believe that?" Jack snorted. "You're a prince. Of course you're thinkin' about that shit. You're raised to always be thinkin' of your country."

Tommy narrowed his eyes. "I told you guys, I was only adopted into the royal family less than a year ago, and I only got my title, like, six months ago. I wasn't raised to think like this. It's all still really new to me and it's hard to remember all that political shit."

"Aw, boohoo, poor little rich prince," Jack mocked, making Tommy wince. "How do we even know you were telling the truth about that? For all we know, you could've just lied and said you were adopted so that if we found out you were Theseus, we'd be more sympathetic to you."

"Actually-" Niki's soft—yet steely—voice cut in, "he's not lying about that. Wilbur talked about his little brother a lot and told me the story of how they adopted him." Tommy blinked, shocked that Niki would come to his defense like that.

But the softness disappeared as quickly as it appeared.

"Still doesn't change the fact that he's a liar about a lot of other things," Niki then added.

"I get it, I lied about a lot and that was pretty shitty of me. But I wasn't trying to lead you into a trap or anything, I swear on my fucking life," Tommy pleaded, desperate to get them to believe him.

"Then why would you join a heist like this?" Quackity pushed, smoke curling from his lips. "Give us a real goddamn reason."

Tommy hesitated, trying to think of how best to explain this. It made no sense from a logical standpoint. He knew that full well. Any other sane person would've dropped the heist as soon as they found out what the target was. But Tommy wasn't a smart or logical person. He ran on instinct and emotion. He followed his heart, not his mind, and it got him into trouble more often than not.

"I-I was fucking lonely, okay?!" Tommy's voice cracked on the word 'lonely'. "Yeah, I have my family and I love them of course, but they were always so busy with their work and shit. And I've never had any real friends before, so when I met you guys and you were all so awesome I felt like I actually could have friends for the first time and I just... I didn't want to let that go." Tears were burning in his eyes again, and Tommy dug his nails into the palm of

his hand to try and keep himself from crying because that would just be unbelievably embarrassing for him right now.

Instead, Tommy turned to look at Tubbo and Ranboo. “Guys, please, you know I wouldn’t try to betray you like that. You gotta believe me.”

Tubbo looked as though he wanted to speak up. He opened his mouth and hope flared in Tommy’s chest, but it fizzled out just as fast when Ranboo put a hand on Tubbo’s shoulder, shaking his head silently. Tubbo closed his mouth again and looked to his feet, sending a stabbing pain through Tommy’s chest.

Even Tubbo and Ranboo didn’t believe him.

“Theseus.” Hearing Quackity use his full name sent chills down his spine. “I think you should leave now.”

His heart ached so much at those words.

“Please, guys, I swear I’m not going-”

“We don’t want to hear it,” Jack cut him off. “Get the fuck out, and don’t come back here.”

Taking a shaky breath, Tommy looked to Niki, knowing the chances were futile but praying he would see some flash of sympathy from her.

Niki’s eyes were back to looking like shards of ice. “We gave you a chance and heard you out. Now go back to the palace, Prince Theseus. We’re done here.”

And that was the gavel being slammed down. The decision was final. Nodding, Tommy wrapped his arms around himself and walked towards the door to the office, hands shaking as he reached for the door handle.

Twisting the knob, he hesitated.

He turned back to look at the group.

“I’m sorry I lied to you all. Even if you don’t believe me, I really do consider myself lucky for getting to be friends with you all,” he said softly.

Then, without waiting for a response, he walked out the door and let it shut behind him. He stalked out of the casino, ignoring Purpled’s confused look when he left so quickly after arriving.

Once he reached the shadows of the forest to hide him from view, he collapsed against a tree and let himself cry.

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As the door shut behind Tommy, something painful lanced through Ranboo’s chest.

He wasn't sure why he had stopped Tubbo from speaking up to defend Tommy. As soon as he had done it, he regretted it, knowing that no one else in the room was going to try and stick up for him. But also he knew the look on his sister's face, the way her eyes had gone so cold, it made you shiver just looking at them. She wasn't going to suddenly turn around and become sympathetic to Tommy right now—if she ever did. Even with Tubbo's support, the outcome would've been the same.

Even still, he should've let Tubbo speak. Tommy had seemed as though he was on the verge of tears when he left, and maybe he wouldn't have been that upset if he knew someone in the room believed him. And in this moment, the only person who still held his faith in Tommy was Tubbo and Tubbo alone.

Ranboo didn't know what to think. While he wanted to have Tubbo's blind faith and trust Tommy after everything, he couldn't shake how badly the betrayal had hurt him. Ranboo had thought they were friends. Friends didn't lie to each other, especially not about something as huge as that. Ranboo could see why Tommy would want to keep quiet about being royalty in the beginning. Niki was so suspicious of him in the early days that any slight misstep probably made him feel like he was stepping on a landmine. But they were well past that at this point. He could've told them the truth at any point in the past few weeks, and things would've been fine.

...right?

The more Ranboo thought about it, the less sure he was. While he wanted to believe that if Tommy had come clean of his own accord everyone would've been alright with it, he knew how paranoid Niki was about this entire heist. Depending on how he worded it, him admitting the truth on his own could have ended up with him getting kicked out anyway.

Tommy had clearly seen that as a possibility, and that was why he'd tried to keep his secret. Whether he was trying to stay with the group out of a genuine sense of friendship, or if he was actually trying to lead them into a trap like Niki and Jack seemed to think, he knew that coming clean wasn't a good idea. Ranboo understood that.

It didn't make it hurt any less though. The Tommy he thought he had been friends with had lied to his face over and over again about who he was. It made him wonder just how much he even actually knew about Tommy. How much of their friendship had been real, and how much of it had been an act.

Was Tommy actually Theseus, or was 'Tommy' just a persona Prince Theseus had put on to gain this group's trust?

Ranboo didn't know. He didn't know anything now, and that was the most frustrating part about all of this. Everything had been turned on its head, and they were all scrambling to try and put themselves back upright.

"So that was a fucking mess," Quackity deadpanned as soon as Tommy's footsteps faded down the hallway.

“Yeah, you can say that again,” Niki muttered, sighing as she rested her hands on the poker table in the center of the room. “Quackity, you need to get in contact with the contractor and tell him the heist is off.”

Quackity whirled around so fast that he knocked a glass off the edge of his desk, and everyone flinched at the shattering sound that followed.

“What the hell do you mean you’re calling off the heist?” Quackity demanded, not even sparing a second glance for the glass now littering the floor. “We can’t do that! We’re only a week away from the ball! If I cancel now, the contractor is going to have my fucking head!”

“So what, you expect us to just go ahead with the plan that the goddamn Prince knows all the details about?” Jack scoffed, raising his eyebrows at Quackity. “Yeah, okay, sounds like a perfect way to walk straight into a fucking trap.”

“I don’t care what you have to do to alter the plan, I can’t cancel on the contractor this close to the date,” Quackity hissed, slamming his hands down on the table. “Hell, the guy has already paid off someone in the palace to help us! I’m gonna be on the line for that if we cancel and I doubt the insider is doing it for just a few coins.”

“Wait, he paid someone off inside the palace?” Fundy then asked, frowning as he folded his arms over his chest.

“Yeah, that was supposed to be the update I gave you all tonight before we found out the great news about our royal friend,” Quackity snorted, jerking this thumb towards the door. “The contractor said he was able to hire someone who already lives inside the palace to give us assistance during the heist itself. He wouldn’t tell me who the contact was, just that we would know them when we saw them.”

“You don’t think that could be Tommy, do you?” Fundy pointed out.

“No, it’s not. Tommy would’ve told us if it was,” Quackity shot back. “Besides, he just worked out the contact recently. Tommy has already been with us for a while now. The timelines just don’t match up.”

“Okay, well contact inside the palace or not, we still can’t just go ahead with the plan we have,” Niki argued, narrowing her eyes. “Why can’t we just cancel anyway and pay the contractor back the fee for the contact?”

Quackity rolled his eyes. “Well aside from the fact that it’s probably a really fucking expensive fee considering this contractor is clearly rich as shit, if we cancel now, we’re never getting another job again. Everyone, and I mean *everyone* in the business was trying to get their hands on this job. I had to fight tooth and nail to set up a meeting with the contractor, and I don’t just mean that in a figurative sense. Some douchebag stabbed me over this,” he explained, holding up his palm and revealing a raised white scar.

“If we give up this job now, a week before it’s supposed to be done, all our names are going to be dragged through the mud. I’m never going to be able to fence anything for you guys again, we’re never going to get given any contracts again, and that’s the best case scenario. I

have no idea how pissed the contractor would be if we cancelled now, but someone with that kind of money is not the type of person you want to make an enemy of.” As Quackity finished, he reached towards his desk to grab another glass and poured himself some scotch, taking a long sip of it and wincing slightly at the taste.

“You, uh, you said that’s the best case scenario. What’s the worst case scenario?” Ranboo spoke up for the first time all evening, his voice wavering.

“Worst case scenario?” Quackity huffed out a humorless laugh. “We’re all dead by the end of the week because our pissed off contractor put a bounty for our heads too high for anyone to turn down.”

Ranboo’s heart stuttered in his chest as he shrunk back into the seat. Oh god. While he’d known the work they did involved some dangerous figures, he’d never thought too deeply about what lengths people were willing to go to to get what they wanted. Sure, going to jail had always been a risk he was well-aware of in this line of work, but he’d never thought he could actually get killed for his involvement in this.

A heavy silence blanketed the room after that. Niki frowned as she picked at her nails, while Quackity downed the rest of his scotch in one gulp. Tubbo was uncharacteristically quiet as he huddled closer to Ranboo, curling in on himself and keeping his head down. Ranboo reached out to rest a hand on his shoulder, although the comfort was as empty as the pit in his stomach.

“We need to change the plan,” Fundy suddenly said, shattering the tense silence. “Change it to something that Tommy doesn’t know about.”

“Even if we change our method, Theseus still knows that there’s a hit being planned on Schlatt’s room the night of the ball,” Niki pointed out, pointedly refusing to call Tommy anything but Theseus now. “That information alone is enough to completely ruin our chances of getting to that book. All he has to do is tell Schlatt what’s going on, and there will be a troop of guards waiting for us the second we open the door to Schlatt’s room.”

“Well then we’d be screwed either way, so why not just go with the mission as planned?” Fundy suggested, pushing off the wall to rest his elbows against the poker table.

“Ah yes, because I’m just jumping at the chance to get arrested,” Jack snapped at Fundy. “Personally I think I’d rather take my chances with the bounty hunters than get fucked over by a child.”

“You’d seriously rather risk getting a hitman hired on you instead of doing this heist?” Fundy asked, raising an eyebrow at Jack.

“Yes, because I know for sure that the royal child we let in here is going to fuck us over the first chance he gets. At least we have a bit more chance with the bounty hunters!” Jack was shouting now, having clearly lost his patience for this argument. Usually in times like these, Niki would calm him down, but she made no moves to do so. Instead, she just stood beside Jack, her expression a mirror of his own.

“And what if Tommy doesn’t fuck us over, huh? We can’t say for sure that he’s going to do that!” Fundy yelled back.

“Don’t be a naive idiot, Fundy! Of course he’s going to fuck us over, he’s royalty! That’s what they all do!”

*“All of you shut the FUCK up!”*

Everyone’s heads whipped towards Ranboo’s side of the room, but thankfully the gazes of the others weren’t directed at him. Instead, everyone was staring wide-eyed at Tubbo, who had jumped out of his seat and pushed back the hair from his eyes so he could properly glare down the group.

“You all are being fucking idiots,” Tubbo hissed. “It doesn’t matter if Tommy is a prince or not, he’s our *friend*. He’s not going to fuck us over like that. I know he won’t.”

“You say that with a lot of confidence for someone who didn’t even know his full name till earlier today,” Jack pointed out, his tone mocking and harsh.

Tubbo visibly bristled at that. “You’re right. I didn’t know his full name. I didn’t know his job. I didn’t really know anything about his background. But even if I didn’t know the surface details, I know who he is. All of you know who he is. Take away the prince title and he’s just Tommy. Our friend who laughs at his own jokes, talks way too much about girls, and is one of the kindest goddamn people I’ve ever met, even if he tries to hide it.” Tubbo stomped over to the poker table, slamming his hands down on the side. “Whether or not you trust him to stay in the group doesn’t matter right now. But me and Ranboo spent more time with him than anyone else in this room, and I can tell you that Tommy isn’t going to betray us like that.”

There was a beat of silence as the others took in Tubbo’s outburst. While Tubbo certainly wasn’t a shrinking violet, it was rare to hear him genuinely raise his voice in anger. In fact, this might’ve been one of the only times Ranboo had heard him shout... ever. It was not only strange, but frightening to witness.

After a few moments, Niki turned to look at Ranboo. “Ranboo, do you agree with what Tubbo said? He’s right that you and Tubbo spent the most time with him out of any of us.”

Ranboo shrunk back in his seat as all eyes suddenly turned to him. He glanced between the different faces watching him—Niki who was struggling to control her anger, Jack who was wearing his outrage on his sleeve, Fundy who just seemed frustrated with the entire situation, Quackity who was keeping his expression very controlled, and Tubbo who was looking at him with a pleading that Ranboo had never seen from him before.

Tubbo clearly believed that Tommy wasn’t going to betray them. Did Ranboo think the same?

He thought over the past few weeks. All the hours he spent chatting with Tommy, laughing at his jokes and rolling his eyes at the light jabs. He thought of their group escapades, running along rooftops at night and helping each other out of the stickiest of situations. He

remembered how excited Tommy had been to rob the brewery, and how thrilled he'd seemed when Ranboo teleported them out of there.

Ranboo thought back to just a few minutes before. When Tommy had left the office, and turned back to tell them how lucky he had been to get the chance to be friends with them. His eyes had been glistening with tears.

Had that really all been a lie? Could someone actually fake a friendship that well?

Ranboo doubted it. No one was that good of an actor.

Even if he had lied about who he was, Tommy was still their friend.

Standing up to join Tubbo at the poker table, Ranboo folded his hands in front of him and nodded. "Tubbo's right. Tommy wouldn't do that to us," he agreed, pressing himself up to Tubbo's side.

Jack narrowed his eyes at the two of them, but stayed quiet as Niki considered them both. Her eyes lingered on Ranboo, and he knew she could read him better than anyone else. Forcing himself not to flinch, he met her gaze head on, and she raised her eyebrows in surprise at his willingness to make eye contact. He could deal with it for a few moments if it meant making her believe him.

After a few tense seconds, Niki glanced away and Ranboo held back a breath of relief.

"Well... if we're going to go ahead with the heist, we need to alter some things about the plan," she said to the group. Before Jack could open his mouth to protest, Niki shot him a pointed look, shutting him down without saying a word. If there was one person in the world that could get Jack to calm down and listen to reason, it was Niki.

"Alright then," Quackity declared, clapping his hands together as he set his glass down on the poker table. "Let's switch this up."

In the end, the plan didn't end up getting changed all that much. A few key details were altered, but they knew that if Tommy really wanted to bring them down, even a complete rehaul of the plan wouldn't prevent that from happening.

Instead of sneaking into the palace disguised as a bakery delivery, Niki and Jack were now going to just use invis pots to sneak through the palace and into the guest wing. It wasn't ideal as they wanted to save as many invis pots as possible, but it was a lot safer than banking on the fact that the servants hadn't been tipped off to any fake deliveries.

Along with that, since they no longer had Tommy to guide them, Fundy, Ranboo, and Tubbo were now going to just have to guess which guest room to break into from the outside of the palace. They were planning on just looking through the windows until they saw an empty room for Ranboo to teleport into and hope for the best from there.

Otherwise... the plan was exactly the same. They were going to use the map Tommy had drawn for them of the palace to lead them to Schlatt's room. There was a chance the map was



inaccurate since Tommy made it, but it wasn't like they had an alternate map to cross-check it they were forced to trust it. Once they got to Schlatt's room, it was basically going to be a fast and dirty search, tearing apart everything to get the book and get out of there as quickly as possible. When it came to an escape, Quackity assured them their contact inside the palace would help them get out. While none of them liked the idea of trusting a random stranger to help them escape, there was no reason for the contractor to fuck them over that way, because if they didn't escape successfully, he wasn't going to get his book.

In the end, no one was particularly thrilled about the new plan, but it was the best they had. Before leaving the office that evening, they sketched out more plans to get a few more invis pots just in case, with Niki, Jack, and Fundy all emphasizing that this was something they would take care of, not Tubbo and Ranboo.

It wasn't anything close to a perfect solution. In fact, Ranboo felt a whole lot worse about the heist than he had yesterday. Not to mention, the walk back to the bakery from the casino was uncomfortably quiet without Tommy's loud rambling to fill up the silence.

A part of Ranboo hoped that he and Tubbo would get to see Tommy again before the ball. But given how luck had screwed them over so far, he doubted that would happen.

Still, he hoped Tommy was okay.

## Chapter End Notes

yeah sorry it's sadchamp tommy hours

also sorry that was mostly dialogue, there was just a lot of talking that needed to be done in the aftermath of the reveal. but keep in mind it's getting pretty close to the ball, so the action will pick up soon ;)

(oh and I'm surprised I haven't seen more people wondering in the comments about who the contractor in general could be because that is an important factor, if you want feel free to leave your guesses lmao)

anyway I hope you guys enjoyed! tell me in the comments what you thought of the chapter, it really makes my day <3

feel free to hmu on tumblr @bonesandthebees

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!